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OUR CHRISTMAS PICTURES.

As our younger readers have already detected, nearly all of our illustrations in this Number are for the children. Christmas is in an especial sense the children's festival. "For unto us *a child* is born," sang the angels to the Bethlehem shepherds. It is the God-child rather than the God-man that we are thinking of at Christmas tide. We behold the Nativity—

"The babe yet lies in smiling infancy
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss;
So both himself and us to glorify."

There is much beyond the Nativity—the sacred life of Jesus, the words He spoke, the wonders He wrought, His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension; but now we go back to the beginning, to the cradle in the manger, to a time when all the good of Christianity was a promised good, not fulfilled as yet. We go back almost within hearing of the angels' song on the Bethlehem hills—we can almost look upon the stars which those glad shepherds saw "bending one way their precious influence" toward the manger-cradle, and can almost seem to join the wise men of the east (whose journey to Bethlehem is illustrated on this page), and to offer our gifts with theirs. The greatest of Italian painters have found their best subjects in connection with the Nativity.—The pictures which they have left us of the Madonna and Child are almost numberless. One of the finest of these—that painted by MURILLO two hundred years ago—we have engraved on page 824.

Going back now to the wise men, we are told in the Gospel that they were guided in their long journey to Bethlehem by a star in the east, which went before them until it stood over the place where the young child lay. For ourselves, we believe that on each Christmas-eve since then some bright star like that of Bethlehem stands over the place where *every* young child lies. Is not every child an image of Christ? It is then peculiarly fitting that on each return of Christmas we should seek out all the children and bring them our gifts, thinking of their childhood as the symbol of that which we then commemorate. We said that on Christmas-eve some star stands over every young child; and we have a fancy that this is what helps dear old Santa Claus find his way so surely to each one of them. He keeps a good look-out for every star, we may be sure. Sad, indeed, and drearily empty are those homes where there are no children, and over which no star stops as a reminder to Santa Claus!

Thinking that Santa Claus—this modern wise man of the east, who travels all over the world on Christmas-eve, and hunts up all the children—might happen to be puzzled how to find a sufficient variety of gifts for so many young people, our artist has, on page 821, good-naturedly volunteered a great many hints (some of them pretty broad hints too, we think, considering the size of stockings) to help the sage old fellow in making up his mind. Generally, however, Santa Claus finds very little difficulty of that sort; and it may be that our artist had in mind a large number of bachelor uncles, who might possibly stand in need of some suggestions. But as to Santa Claus, *he* knows pretty well what's wanted. There he is with his pack, as you see him on page 820. The star, or, in this case, the *stars*, have stopped right over the chimney, and Santa Claus has scrambled down into the chamber. He has just taken one glance at the sleeping faces there, and has read exactly the wish written on each—and pat into the stockings go the answers. Sometimes a child has so many wishes that his face becomes a tangled scrawl, and old Santa drops his pack in amazement, and mutters something about a very crazy little head, or a fearfully short stocking—which is it? Let us hope, at any rate, that he deciphers the most important parts of the scrawl, and does his best, so far as the stocking allows.

Christmas morning is the merriest time of all. Then all the fun comes out—all the discoveries, the surprises—the greetings. Of course the children are out of bed before any one else in the house and hold a mad carnival, having every thing their own way. They have discovered their presents (see page 825) even before they have got up. Then there is a jump, a scramble among the tell-tale stockings and among the various articles in the room that could not be got into stockings. Now a mad freak takes possession of them, and see in what style they have got themselves up (on page 820) for an unannounced call on papa and mamma! This is fun! Only once a year, dear children, you know that; and you don't mind it if papa does shake his fist at you—you know it's all in fun—he would be a monstrous brute if he meant any thing by it!

So all day long and the carnival has no end till Christmas is over, and weary roysterers are all in bed again, dreaming the merriest dreams, in which jumping-jacks, dolls and rocking-horses, toy-elephants, toy-roosters, toy-engines, music-boxes, drums, and old Santa Claus himself are jumbled together in the maddest confusion!

But don't forget, little children, that this is the day that Christ was born; and may your childhood be in truth, as it is in symbol, an image of His divine childhood. "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," said, and always says, our Saviour. Is it strange then, dear children, that we invest you with something sacred and divine on this Christmas-day; and that we gather you about us, because you are the beautiful flowers of our life and the most precious earthly images of God's love? And here you are all alike; remember that. The pets of fashionable homes and the ragged children of the street climb up together into Christ's arms and receive the same blessing. On this day there are no (and why should there ever be any?) Pariah, or outcast children.

THE WISE MEN GUIDED BY THE STAR IN THE EAST.—[DRAWN BY GUSTAVE DORÉ.]

This is the lesson which our common Father taught us when His own Son "was born in the oxen's stall," and not in a palace chamber, "not amidst gold and purple." But the angels did not check their song on that account, and the wise men were not abashed because of the manger. See! it is the lesson of Charity, which is greater than Hope or Faith. And because this thought, so appropriate to the season, is the burden of Mrs. MARY HOWITT'S "New Christmas Carol" for 1867, we give this beautiful poem to our readers entire:

Anno Domini 1.

Of all the days throughout the year,
The gladdest day and best,
Comes in the heart of winter,
When nature is at rest.

When the days are at the shortest,
And the nights are dark and long,
And only of the singing birds
The robin pipes his song.

When not a flower is on the hill,
Nor a green leaf on the tree,
And only the holly and ivy
Are beautiful to see.

Then cometh the best day of the year,
The blessedest day of all,
When Jesus Christ, the Saviour,
Was born in the oxen's stall.

Not amid gold and purple,
In pomp of worldly pride,
With chancellors and archbishops,
And ladies on every side;

But all among the oxen,
Those plodding and patient things,
Was born, in the depth of winter,
The King of earthly kings.

And the simple country shepherds,
Keeping their flocks by night,
Beheld the glory of heaven
Shining round in golden light.

And a grand, majestic angel,
That spake, like music clear,
Of the joyfullest glad tidings
That earth or heaven could hear—

Of the Christ, the promised Saviour,
Who on that blessed morn,
In the city of great King David,
Of humble folk was born.

Then chorusing ten thousands
Their songs of praise began,
Glory to God, in the highest,
Peace and good-will to man!

And down the stream of ages
Has flowed, without surcease,
In ever-increasing fullness,
As human wants increase,

This great, good gift of blessing,
This joy from heaven above;
A river whose measureless fountain
Is God's eternal Love!

Anno Domini 1867.

And now 'tis the Christmas morning,
The same day of the year,
The sky is heavy with snow-clouds,
The last green leaf is sere.

The little birds sit cowering
Upon the frozen bough,
And the beggar-children murmur
"'Tis winter fairly now!"

'Tis winter, pitiless winter,
The earth is barren and cold,
But the Christmas fires are burning,
And pockets are lined with gold.

For the great, good gift of blessing
That came down long ago,
When earthly rivers are frozen,
Is fullest in its flow.

Then the rich stint not in giving,
The loving stint not in love,
And earth in the Christmas season
Resembles heaven above;

Where the rich are the richly giving,
And the hungry lack not food,
And the loving, like Christ, the Saviour,
Can always be doing good.

So the sickly work-house children,
That know not childhood's play,
They laugh and sing for the gladness
That comes on Christmas-day.

And the old men and the women,
Bent double with age and pain,
Are ready to think at Christmas
They're almost young again.

The children are home from the school-house,
For tasks and lessons are o'er,
And the poor little weary teacher,
She rests, if she does no more.

But the loving, who stint not in loving,
Have seen her weary and sad,
And she now, in the blessing of Christmas,
Is gladdest where all are glad.

For God, the most bountiful giver,
To whom times and seasons are naught,
Has seen her patience in working,
Has heard the prayer of her thought;

And has given, though she never asked it,
Nor had dared so high to aspire,
The love of a man, honest-hearted,
The wealthy and good village squire.

For God is so willing to give us
A blessing our hopes far above,
If we only are patient in duty,
And seek to be like Him in love.

So let us rejoice in the Christmas,
The season of gladsomest cheer,
And make the great blessing it bringeth
Joy-giving the whole of the year.

HARPER'S WEEKLY.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1867.

WILKIE COLLINS'S NEW NOVEL.

In the next Number of HARPER'S WEEKLY *for January 4, 1868, will be commenced the publication of* "THE MOONSTONE," *a new Serial Novel by* WILKIE COLLINS, *Author of* "Armadale," "The Woman in White," "No Name," etc., *illustrated with Original Drawings by* PARSONS, JEWETT, BUSH, *and other American Artists.* This Novel, printed from the *Author's Manuscript, will be published here simultaneously with its issue in Mr.* CHARLES DICKENS'S *paper,* "All the Year Round."

PRACTICAL RECONSTRUCTION.

IN a late speech at Richmond Senator WILSON said that he believed seven of the late rebel States would be restored to their relations in the Union by the 4th of July, and he added that there were not more than fifty thousand persons disfranchised by the Reconstruction bill in all the unorganized States. The bill permits every registered male citizen to vote who can swear that he has not been disfranchised for rebellion or felony, that he has not been a State officer and afterward engaged in rebellion, or a United States officer and violated his oath to support insurrection. Unless every body without regard to previous conduct were allowed to vote, this exclusion is reasonable.

Under these conditions a Convention has been held in Alabama which has completed a Constitution and adjourned. The utmost ridicule has been thrown upon it by the newspapers which call themselves Democratic, and mainly upon the ground that the delegates were humble, unlearned, and inexperienced men. But these delegates have framed a moderate and wise Constitution. There was extravagant speaking, but no extravagance so revolting and ridiculous as has characterized many a Convention in the Southern States heretofore; and although it was loudly declared that the delegates would proscribe large classes and ruin the State, there has been no general proscription and a willingness to trust the will of the whole people.

Meanwhile there have been other Conventions, called Conservative, in some of the Southern States. They were composed chiefly of leaders and followers in the late rebellion. These persons profess acquiescence in the result of the war, but insist that they shall be allowed to monopolize the political power in their States, and that the loyal freedmen shall be left at their disposition. Now if the derided Conventions of which some of the freedmen were members had proposed that the political power of the States should be exclusively reserved to the loyal citizens we should have heard a howl from the New York *World* to Mr. BRICK POMEROY of the Lacrosse *Democrat*, and from Mackerelville to the Albany *Argus*, that so abominable a suggestion would never be tolerated by a free people, et cetera.

The people of this country have now an opportunity of determining the wisdom of trusting the great body of the people of the Southern States to reorganize their governments, instead of summoning a single class of them to the work. We doubt if so gratifying a spectacle was ever witnessed as that of an assembly springing from the votes of a constituency largely composed of a newly-emancipated population, which, with so little delay, and with such moderation and sagacity, completed an organic law in which no revenge is perpetuated. It inspires the profoundest confidence in the fundamental doctrine of the American system of government, and is the sure earnest of the final popular rejection of the spirit of caste and oligarchic government which survives under the name of the Democratic policy.

THE READINGS OF MR. DICKENS.

THE readings of Mr. DICKENS can not disappoint any one who has any conception of what a reading must be. The natural excitement at the presence of so famous and beloved an author may very easily confuse an ardent mind as to the character of the entertainment, and so lead to a kind of disappointment like that which so many feel at the first sight of Niagara. It is only a waterfall, they say, after all. So it is only an author reading his story with wonderful dramatic art. But how wonderful the art is no one can understand until he perceives it. The reader, indeed, has the advantage of the perfect familiarity of the hearer with the scene he portrays. The mind and imagination and sympathy of the audience are set with the scenery of the play. The audience, moreover, is ready and eager to admire. But these admissions do not in the least affect the judgment which must pronounce Mr. DICKENS's reading the perfection of that art.

A gentleman in full evening dress stands before you. He says in a veiled and not rich or sympathetic voice, with the English tone and inflection, and with entire composure, that he will have the honor to read to you, and he begins as it were in the same breath. It is very simple and expressive descriptive reading, and his right hand moves continually upon the wrist, slightly indicating actions or movements which are described. At length some one speaks, Scrooge, perhaps, or Buzfuz, or Bob Cratchit. His voice, his expression, his personality, are palpably there. The impression is vivid and complete; and for an hour you live in the world of the story, hearing and seeing its persons, laughing, musing, tearful, as its varying aspects unfold; and when at last the parent of Sam Weller calls from the gallery in his fat, wheezy voice, "Put it down with a we, my Lerd, put it down with a we," you scarcely refrain from raising your eyes to see the jolly red face of the becoated and bewrapped victim of vidders.

Through the whole, the movement of the reader's hands and body, although he stands generally quietly in one spot, and the marvelously modulated voice, and the shifting expressions of the face, never seem too much or too little, are indeed scarcely observed in themselves, and are but part of the means by which the spell is woven around the imagination of the listener. The reader never fails to resume the descriptive strain in the same tone, however rapidly it interchanges with the dialogue. He makes no points; he strains at no effects; and there is a perpetual consciousness of reserved power. Meanwhile, as you gaze and listen, with all the full and eager absorption in the story, there is a half-consciousness of the intense interest with which you watch the man who created Sam Weller and Oliver Twist, and the innumerable company so familiar and so dear.

The feeling with which the author is scrutinized is the homage of the heart to great genius greatly used. His stories are plea for humanity. They are protests against popular and traditional wrongs. They sympathize with struggling poverty, with the outcast, and neglected, and forlorn. They cherish the simple virtues that sweeten life like sunshine. They deal tremendous blows at hoary iniquity. Every school-keeping tyrant and miser in England winced when Nicholas Nickleby came, and scores of them cried out, "It isn't I!" And how many and many and many a kinder word has been spoken, and loving look given, and generous deed done, because of this man's written words! The pathos, the humor, the analysis, the insight, the experience, the power—these are noble gifts and qualities, and he shares them with others. But what other series of stories in any literature is so prodigious and various and efficient an illustration and enforcement of the essential precept of Christianity—"Love one another?"

THE TRUE STORY OF THE REPEAL OF THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE.

A CORRESPONDENT of a Chicago paper furnishes what purports to be a conversation with STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS on this subject, which, being copied into the New York *Times*, with an introduction calling attention to it, may be regarded by many as an accurate statement. The subject is of such great importance, and the errors of the correspondent are so manifest, that we present a true history of the transaction.

In the conversation alluded to Mr. DOUGLAS appears as the author of the clause of repeal, and President PIERCE as remonstrating against its introduction. The agony of Mr. PIERCE was, according to the letter, so intense that he remarked: "If I could prevail with you, I would go down on my knees before you." The effect of the measure of repeal, it would seem, was fully understood by President PIERCE as a powerful disturbing element of the peace of the country; but the fact that the organ of the Administration sustained the measure to the extent of pledging the use of the appointing power in its behalf, and that President PIERCE signed the bill, are not weighed against the force of this statement. If President PIERCE at first opposed the measure, which he may have done, he undoubtedly supported it before its passage. The Washington *Union*, during the pendency of the measure, said: "It need not now be repeated that President PIERCE was an early and that he has been an ardent and constant advocate of the Nebraska Bill."

The real authors of the clause of repeal were Senator JONES, of Tennessee, and Mr. DIXON, Senator from Kentucky. The Nebraska Bill was introduced into the Senate in December, 1853, by Mr. DODGE, of Iowa, and referred to the Committee on Territories, of which Mr. DOUGLAS was chairman. In January, 1854, the bill, which established a territorial government for Nebraska *only*, was reported to the Senate by Mr. DOUGLAS, in a form which conformed to the territorial bills passed in 1850 for Utah and New Mexico. In the report which accompanied the bill, after quoting the language of the Missouri Compromise, which "forever prohibited" slavery north of 36° 30′, the Committee say that its legality was questioned by many statesmen, and that a large portion of the people hold that every citizen may go into the Territories with his property, but "*your Committee do not feel themselves called upon to enter into the discussion of these controverted questions. They involve the same grave issues which produced the agitation, the sectional strife, and the fearful struggle of* 1850;" and further, that they will not depart from the course pursued in 1850, "*either by affirming or repealing*" the Missouri Compromise.

The bill as reported was printed in the Washington *Sentinel* early in January, 1854; but it was reprinted a few days later with another clause added, which to some extent contradicted the express statements of the Report, as it gave the people of the Territory which was wholly north of 36° 30′ power to decide all questions relating to slavery for themselves. On the 16th of January Mr. DIXON, of Kentucky, proposed his amendment (*Congressional Globe*, 213), which declared that the Missouri Compromise shall not be construed to apply to Nebraska "or to any other Territory of the United States," and that all citizens may take their slaves to, and hold them in any such Territories. This amendment produced, as was observed, much fluttering and some consultation. It was suggested by Mr. JONES, of Tennessee, who prepared himself to support the amendment, and a few days afterward attended the Senate with that view, but on rising for the purpose he learned from Mr. DOUGLAS that the latter on that day had reported his bill anew, adopting in effect the clause offered by Mr. DIXON. Mr. DOUGLAS at the time went over to the seat of Mr. JONES, and said, "I accepted the amendment. I was in the position of a lawyer whose declaration had been well demurred to. I did not need to argue the question." The reply of Mr. JONES proved that he had not expected this from Mr. DOUGLAS. It can not be repeated here.

That Mr. DIXON was thus the real author of the clause of repeal, and that it had not before been thought of by Mr. DOUGLAS, may be inferred from this, and the remark of Mr. RICHARDSON, Representative from Illinois, in answer to the charge that the latter then supported repeal, although two years before he had introduced the Nebraska Bill without that provision. He said, "When the Senator from Kentucky introduced his proposition to repeal the restriction at this session I determined upon my course" (*Congressional Globe*, 795). His close relations with Mr. DOUGLAS confirm the inference that the latter had not till then determined to touch that measure.

It is very probable that Mr. JONES (who was a Whig and a political opponent of Mr. DOUGLAS) had no idea that the amendment suggested by him to Mr. DIXON, also a Whig, whose successor had been elected, would be accepted. His real object was probably to compel Mr. DOUGLAS (who he said was riding at the same time two horses) into a position which would hazard his claims to be the successor of General PIERCE, by exposing him to the animosity of the South for opposing Repeal, or to the animosity of the North for giving it support. The language of Mr. DOUGLAS which subjected him to criticism was this—that the measures of 1850 in *effect* repealed the Missouri Compromise, although in a letter of October 23, 1850, extensively circulated at the North, he had affirmed "that neither party had gained or lost any thing so far as the question of Slavery is concerned." His elevation to the Presidency was considered probable, unless the situation were changed by his rejection or acceptance of some measure relating to Slavery deemed vital by one or the other of the two sections. The trap, for such it probably was, to ensnare Mr. DOUGLAS was readily entered by his acceptance of Mr. DIXON's amendment. The terrible results of this scheme, which soon became a favorite measure with the South, are now in part historical.

Mr. DOUGLAS was probably led into acquiescence in the amendment, as was the *Journal of Commerce* and other kindred prints, if there were any such, from the tone of the North on the proposition made by the *Journal of Commerce*, in advance of the adoption of the Compromise Measures of 1850, to extend the Missouri line from the western boundary of Texas out to the Pacific Ocean. On the very day the proposal was published the same proposition was made in the Senate and sustained earnestly by Mr. DOUGLAS; but, although the Missouri Compromise was supported in 1820 by the votes of a nearly unanimous North against a divided South, the proposition to extend the line to the Pacific, through our then recent Mexican acquisitions, was opposed in the North with such vehemence as to induce Mr. DOUGLAS to decide, when Mr. JONES and Mr. DIXON placed a square and bold amendment before him, to go with the South, which professed to look upon the line of 36° 30′ as a stigma, rather than with the North, which had shown such apparent indifference.

The prophetic warnings of Mr. JEFFERSON on this subject, and the threatening aspect assumed while repeal was in progress by the North, were disregarded. Mr. JEFFERSON said of this line:

"This momentous question, like a fire-bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union. It is hushed, indeed, for the moment. But this is a reprieve only, not the final sentence. A geographical line, coinciding with a marked principle, moral and political, once conceived and held up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated, and every new irritation will mark it deeper and deeper."

It is very certain that President Pierce might easily have defeated this repeal by the influence of his administration, quietly used, or by means of the veto power; but no conception could have been formed, either by him or by Mr. Douglas, of the whirlwind of passion which the measure was destined to produce. That Mr. Douglas proved his want of true statesmanship in this policy must now be conceded.

Although the line was obliterated in its application to the Territory in question, its ultimate effect was the obliteration of slavery itself, reached through "innumerable woes." The bill, as first reported by Mr. Douglas, treated the territory as one (Nebraska); but in the report accepting Mr. Dixon's amendment it was, after mysterious consultation, cut into two (Kansas and Nebraska), doubtless with the intention that one should be free and the other slave, thus giving to the South the fruits of its victory.

THE ABYSSINIAN EXPEDITION.

Mr. Disraeli has persuaded Parliament to give him the money for his expedition to Abyssinia; but we doubt if Mr. Chandler will persuade Congress to fit out privateers to devastate English ships during the war that may follow. Perhaps Mr. Chandler did not understand the object of the war, or perhaps he cared nothing about it, seeing merely a chance to deal a blow at England. But whoever encourages hostility between England and this country seems to us neither a friend of the United States nor of civilization; not because we have reason to fear that we might get the worst of a struggle, but because the welfare of nobody in either country could possibly be promoted by it. And a proposition like Mr. Chandler's seems to us as unworthy of the grave attention of the Senate as Mr. Schenck's suggestion of a gold medal for the President and the filibustering upon the impeachment seemed to us unworthy of the House.

It is now many months since sixty-five European captives fell into the hands of King Theodore of Abyssinia, some of whom were English missionaries. They have been held closely imprisoned, and every hope of their peaceful release having failed, the English Government were obliged either to abandon them altogether or to attempt their rescue. It has resolved upon the latter and has appropriated two millions of pounds for the purpose, and dispatched an expedition which will comprise not less than 12,000 trained troops and will very probably double the number. There is a natural desire to know something about Abyssinia and King Theodore, and something also of the chances of such an expedition; and Mr. Henry Kingsley, who has served in similar enterprises, writes an article to help satisfy curiosity.

Father Labos, a Portuguese priest, said, nearly two centuries ago, that the Abyssinian climate is a perpetual spring, more delicious and charming than that of Portugal; and Father Poncet, in 1698, declares that there is no country more populous and fruitful, the lilies, jonquils, and tulips making it a perfect Paradise.

In 1863 Mr. Dufton, a missionary at Khartoum, rode upon a donkey through the country and visited King Theodore; and more recently Sir Samuel and Lady Baker also went into Abyssinia to learn Arabic. Mr. Dufton describes the highlands of the country as resembling the Scotch highlands, covered with the fertility of the Rhine-land, except that the vegetation is tropical and the flowers magnificent. The whole region is remarkably healthy, and neither of the two modern authors, Dufton and Baker, mention any case of fever contracted in Abyssinia.

Mr. Dufton found the famous King Theodore in a hut, dressed in plain and rather dirty cotton shirt and trowsers, and his majesty and the missionary breakfasted together upon aracky and honey-wine, with "teff bread" and stewed meat. The royal Theodore looks about forty-five years old, is of medium height, and of a tough, wiry, and well-knit frame, rather than powerful. His complexion is dark, but he has apparently no negro blood. His features are altogether European; the nose arched and pointed, the mouth "perfect," the eye black and fiery, the forehead high and rather prominent, and he has very little beard or mustache. The king's manner is very pleasant, even polite; his smile fascinating, and his general expression intelligent and benevolent.

After advancing eighty miles from the Red Sea, the troops will be on the watershed that pours the floods toward Egypt. This is the difficult part of the expedition. There is a rise sometimes of five hundred feet in the mile, "which is mere climbing," and the troops must march in single file. If this pass were defended the invading army would have serious work before it, but Mr. Kingsley says that Theodore has lost possession of the heads of the pass, which are held by a tribe hostile to him. King Theodore's troops are divided into cavalry, infantry, and fusileers, of whom the last only are armed with guns. They are reputed to be brave fighters until they are once defeated, then they become a mere rabble. Sir Robert Napier commands the British forces.

If the commissariat is efficient there seems a good chance of success in all but the rescue of the prisoners. If the king does not surrender them at once, and is defeated, he will hardly suffer them to escape. Then all that will be done, we suppose, will be as revenge and punishment. There is also the alternative of distress and disease among the troops. Indeed the expedition is overhung by a heavy cloud of doubt; and there must be many an aching heart in England waiting further tidings, and remembering the ghastly scenes in India.

THE ASPECT OF IRELAND.

The immense demonstrations which have followed the Fenian executions at Manchester, and which the British Government have forbidden, are signs of a profound and perilous discontent. Goldwin Smith, who has been a close student of Irish affairs, and has written a very valuable work upon Ireland, has recently stated in a public letter what he believes to be the root of the difficulty. It is the want of a national life; and he goes so far as to suggest a session of Parliament in Ireland to consider grievances. John Bright, in his Dublin speech of last year, indicated a remedy to be sought in relieving Ireland of the established church, and especially in a system of change of ownership of the land by Parliamentary action. But this policy, if Goldwin Smith be correct, would not avail; and if he be correct, his own policy would be perhaps resultless. "Nothing short of the independence of Ireland will ever satisfy the Fenians," says a late letter in the *Times*; and if that be so, England has no alternative but surrender, or a still more absolute conquest, or an indefinite prolongation of the present situation.

That this feeling of independence is the inspiration of Fenianism is as evident as that it has always been the spring of Irish rebellion. Lord Dufferin is reported as saying that three-fourths of the Irish are thoroughly loyal. But the disaffected element is so large and so influential that it overbears the other. Mr. Greeley is always fond of saying that a majority of the Southerners were averse to rebellion. But they certainly did not have their way; and if a minority is able to keep Ireland constantly disturbed and the English Government constantly anxious the duty of the Government is plain. It must either overpower by force, or it must conciliate by statesmanship. If, indeed, the minority are, as the letter alluded to, insists, bent upon the independence of Ireland, no conciliation would avail. Yet there is no way to ascertain so sure as the trial of a new Irish policy. Much has been done in that country; but the anomalies of the British system of government there are extraordinary, and still more extraordinary is British persistence in them.

Emerson says that in talking with an Englishman every thing goes very smoothly until you come to the established church; then a valve seems to shut in his brain, and there is an end of the conversation in that direction. But Ireland is an Englishman's insanity. Carlyle can think of no policy but submersion for twenty-four hours. The practical statesmanship upon which England incessantly prides herself seems to fail, and to become sheer unreason when it is applied to Ireland. What folly can be so supreme as the English Church establishment in that country? Large districts are of the Romish faith; the people are poor, ignorant, superstitious, and wholly under priestly influence, and they are forced to support a church which they hate nationally and religiously. The two strongest passions that affect great populations are in constant exasperation against British rule. The danger and the difficulty are complicated by the dispersion of the people through England, where they maintain an incessant irritation and consequent alarm.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* argues that there are no "positive grievances," and that the sole grievance is the presence of the Government. It is idle, however, to deny what many of the most intelligent men in England acknowledge, and what the whole world knows. There are very positive and grave grievances in Ireland; and to say that there is nothing to do but to relinquish the island or continue the present situation is to beg the whole question. The case demands the experiment of some sweeping measures of reform such as John Bright proposes. Let the Parliament meet in Dublin. Let it investigate. Let it reform the Church system and the land-tenure. Let it make Ireland feel that it received equal justice with all other parts of the kingdom, and await the result. It can not be so disastrous as awaiting the result of sullen persistence and defiance, and refusal to recognize grievances.

If we are told that we don't understand the situation, and that nobody but an Englishman can, we shall remember that Americans used to say precisely the same thing about slavery; and their foreign friends proved to be the wiser when they said the situation could not endure.

THE WRIT *DE LUNATICO.*

It is getting to be necessary to issue the writ of *De Lunatico Diplomatico Inquirendo* in the case of the Secretary of State. While the mind of the whole country is intently devoted to the vital point of the reduction of taxation and the resumption of specie payment, Mr. Seward, by buying the Russian Possessions at the North and the island of St. Thomas in the Gulf of Mexico, is inviting extraordinary offers of real estate from other governments, and is adding scores of millions of dollars to the public debt.

The Secretary was never famous for economical views of the management of public affairs. As Senator he was always favorable to national grants and subsidies and of a certain magnificent style of government, which is impressive but onerously expensive. The later political philosophy, if known to him, is rejected with superb disdain. That governments should discharge very precise and limited functions, and not undertake what may be called private business, is a view which is not tolerated by him. In obedience to the tenets of the political school to which he belongs, Mr. Seward seems also to consider mere territorial acquisition a cardinal advantage to a nation, and he is evidently anxious to signalize his name in connection with an immense enlargement of our domain.

Now national aggrandizement, including territory and population, by purchase, is as perilous as that by conquest. That enlargement is alone safe which results from what may be called natural gravitation, or the tendency of a similar political system and state of society. It has indeed long been a theory of Mr. Seward's that this whole continent politically gravitates to the United States; but he seems to think that the gravitation is accomplished whenever a bargain can be made for the transfer. But it seems to us that if there be any truth in his theory, it is merely that weak powers are always in danger from strong neighbors, or that when the condition of this country and of some neighboring state shows that absorption will be advantageous to both, it should be completed upon honorable terms. The doctrine of political gravitation, like that of manifest destiny, is very apt to turn out piracy or purchase. Piracy, as a national policy, is not commendable, and purchase may be very doubtful.

The last acquisitions mentioned as possible are the islands of Cuba and Porto Rico, which Spain is said to have offered to the United States for $150,000,000, one-third to be paid in cash, one-third at the end of one year, and the remainder at the end of six years. If we acquire Cuba we get a territory nearly as large as New York, and a population of some 1,200,000, about that of New York in 1820. It is the last stronghold of slavery, the colored people being about half of the population, and slavery, of course, would end with annexation. In the present condition of this country we must closely consider the political consequences of every such increase of territory and population; and we must ask whether it is highly desirable at this time to add to the United States a foreign population of ex-slaveholders and freedmen, with their territory in the neighborhood of our own late slave section. Even if the annexation were in itself desirable, the time is peculiarly ill-chosen; nor need we be troubled by any fear of the acquisition of Cuba by England, if we fail to snap at the opportunity. England can not now strengthen herself by any extension of her colonial system, nor is her experience of remote dominion such that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who lately asked with diffidence two millions of pounds, as a first payment for the rescue of a few Englishmen in Abyssinia, would be very forward to ask thirty millions to buy an island upon the American coast.

The report about Cuba would not excite attention except for the fact that Mr. Seward has evidently set his heart upon the policy of territorial extension. And even should it prove incorrect, no man knows how soon we may be bargaining for Brazil or Mexico.

TOO MUCH DOCTORING.

Every candid physician of large private practice will confess that nine-tenths of the cases to which he is called to administer are such as require neither the advice of the doctor nor the use of a drug. Most of such voluntary patients, eager to display their tongues to the inspection and to submit their pulses to the titillation of the fashionable Sangrado of town or village, and to reveal to him the mysteries of their digestion and other functions, are women. Of these there are many, doubtless, who are afflicted with what may be considered a real malady—hypochondria. Such believe themselves to be ill, and in fact are so, and require, if not a doctor or a drug, both physical and moral treatment.

There are many more, however, who know that they are well, and yet pretend to be ill. It seems strange that any one should be so fond of being drenched with draughts and scorched with blisters as to affect a disease that does not exist. A celebrated divine, in making an eloquent appeal in behalf of a city dispensary, assured his listeners that they might bestow their money without fear of its being wasted upon impostors, for where, he asked, could you find a human being who would lie for a taste of castor-oil or the sensation of an active dose of Epsom salts?

Such impostors probably are not frequent among the poor who are forced to resort to the unsophisticated drugging and rude handling of the Dispensary doctor. They abound, however, among the rich and delicate females who compose the larger portion of the patients of the sympathetic physician of fashion.

The fact, astounding as it may appear, is no less a fact, and is confirmed by the writings and experience of the most intelligent medical observers. There is one remarkable case of undoubted authenticity, recorded by a famous physician of Dublin. A young girl belonging to a family of wealth and distinction complained of a pain in her elbow. Medical counsel was sought, and medical advice given. Treatment of the severest kind was submitted to year after year, without apparent result, until finally physicians and surgeons, finding that they could not cure the arm, determined to get rid of it by cutting it off. Amputation was performed, and then upon dissection of the limb the secret was discovered. The elbow was stuck full as a pin-cushion with pins. The young girl, for no other motive than to put herself in the interesting position of a sick patient, and thus to awaken the sympathy of her family and friends, had for years tortured herself, and finally submitted to the agony of mutilation.

It is seldom, perhaps, that such heroic examples of imposition are found, but the same morbid desire of sympathy is filling every where the lists of the doctors with patients and their pockets with fees. Spinsters and young widows form by far the most numerous portion of these cases. The former, either from want of personal charms or some other obvious cause, despairing, and the latter by accident being suddenly bereft of that great source of human sympathy, marriage, are apt to seek what they desire elsewhere. This desire for sympathy, like all other desires, when not gratified naturally, becomes excessive as well perverse in its manifestation; and one of the most frequent forms it assumes is the affectation of disease, for no other purpose than to obtain the visit of the good-looking and favorite doctor, to provoke his *tactus eruditus*—his "skilled touch"—and to awaken the interest that the sick never fail to do among friends and acquaintances. The obvious consequences are, the useless expenditure of a great deal of money, and much unnecessary inconvenience to every one brought into relation with the pretended patient. More serious results may follow, and indeed have followed. This yielding to a morbid desire for sympathy is in itself a moral debauchery, which unstrings the nerves and unfits the female mind for every duty in life. A woman thus places herself, moreover, at the mercy of the first unprincipled medical attendant she may call to act as a confederate in her imposture.

The causes of the evil are easily traced to the senseless training of women. Their superficial education deprives them of those resources which alone can supply the serious interests, mental, moral, and physical, which divert from unhealthy sentiment and lead to judicious views and right conduct of life. Girls are brought up with too exclusive a view to the mere act of matrimony, without regard to the performance of its duties. The practices of fashionable life, too, seem to be established for no other purpose than to bring the two sexes in close proximity for pairing. Balls and parties it is well known are the matrimonial markets of fashion. If a healthful tone were given to female emotion by a more substantial education and a less free indulgence in social excitement, there would be no such morbid desire for sympathy, and the physician would not be called in until his presence was absolutely necessary. Then, with less of the doctor, there would not be so great reason to complain of "Too much Doctoring."

☞ We are indebted to the courtesy of Messrs. Althof, Bergman, & Co., Maiden Lane, for the use of the models from which the engraving of toys on page 821 of this issue was made.

DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE.

THE FORTIETH CONGRESS.

The Confiscation bill of last session which had for its purpose the disposal by the government of certain property in the South, came up in the House on December 10, and after several speeches *pro* and *con* further consideration was postponed until January 21.

The bill from the Senate Committee on Territories for the regulation of the jury system of Utah came up in the Senate on December 13. It provides, among other minor matters, that marriages in the Territory shall be solemnized only by justices of the Supreme Court or justices of the peace, and expressly forbids polygamy; and to be present at a Mormon marriage is to commit crime, and incur a fine of $1000.

In the House, on December 16, a resolution declaring that the House of Representatives will never retrograde from its position relative to reconstruction was adopted by yeas 111, nays 32.

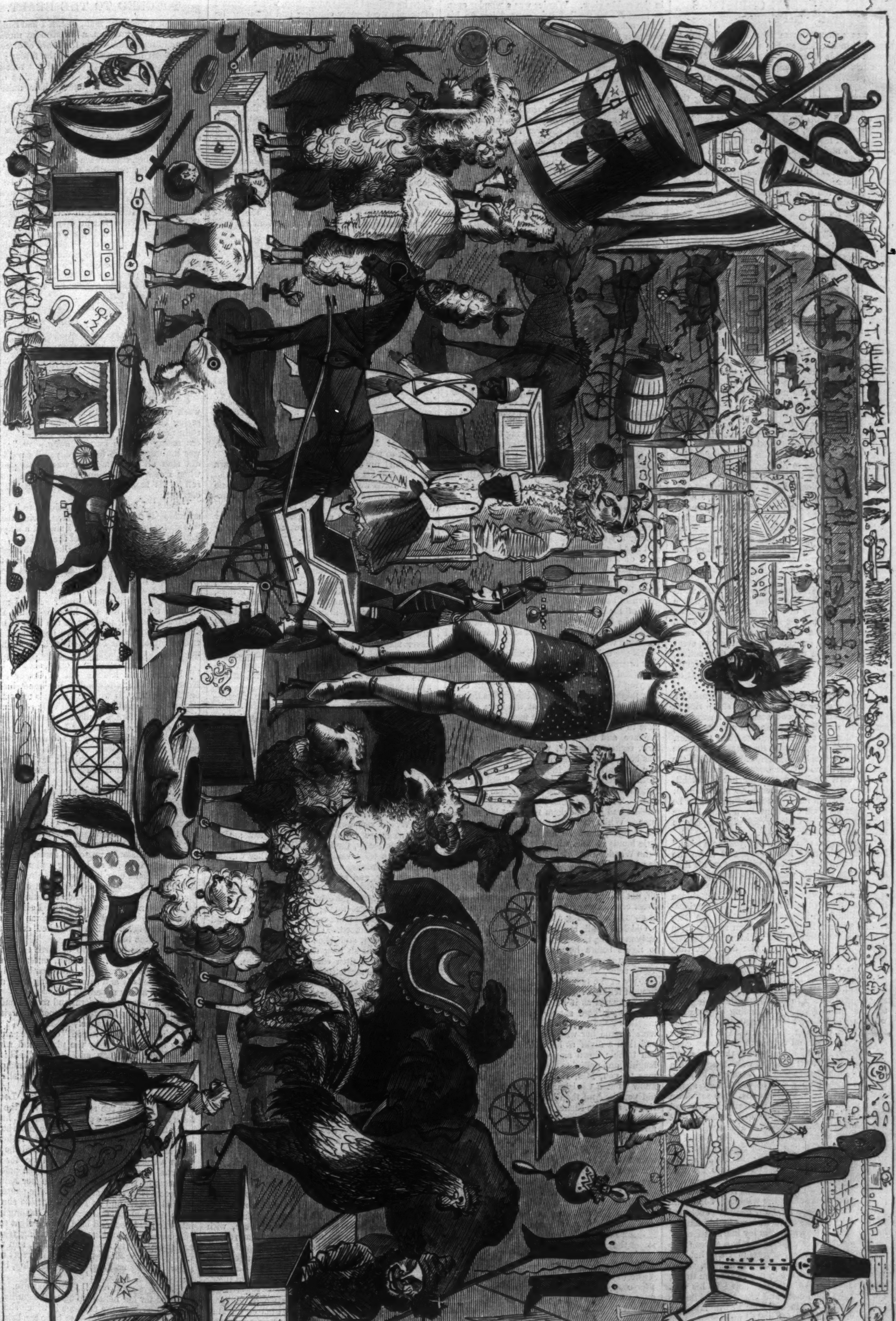
FOREIGN NEWS.

The conference on the Roman question has proved another of Napoleon's many failures. All idea of arranging the affairs of Italy on a new basis by a conference of the European powers was abandoned on December 13, in consequence of the refusal of the great powers to attend.

A singular method of effecting a rescue was attempted in London on December 13, by the friends of the Fenian prisoner Colonel Burke. A barrel of gunpowder was rolled against the wall of the prison and exploded. The prison-wall was blown down, several houses shattered, four persons killed, and about forty wounded. The prisoners did not escape.

SANTA CLAUS.—Drawn by Charles G. Bush.—[See First Page.]

AN EARLY CHRISTMAS CALL.—[See First Page.]



CHRISTMAS TOYS—A QUIET HINT TO UNCLE JOHN.—[See First Page.]

JOHN WARDER'S CHRISTMAS GIFT.

It was a lonely room of a lonely house—a house against which, as the needs of the city's growth in trade encroached upon the older building sites, the tide of improvement had surged vainly, leaving it at every ebb unmoved as ever. The shadows deepened as the fire burned lower and lower, a film of white ashes inclosing the smouldering coals. The master of the house sat at a table, with his head resting on his hand; a stern man of forty, or thereabouts, though the deep lines of his face made him seem older.

There is nothing sad in gray hairs and wrinkles, *per se*. When they come as the genuine mark of duteous toil which has kept pace with the marching years, they but testify—not sadly, surely—that the soul is surpassing the limits of its garments, and that the time is coming by-and-by for its

"Leaving its outgrown shell by life's unresting sea."

But locks that have silvered slowly through still night-times, when a torturing conscience "murdered sleep;" deep corrugations furrowed into plastic cheek and brow by the convulsions of pride, passion, or remorse, there is nothing in all the world more sorrowful to see than these.

John Warder had been made for a nobler life than he was living. In the quarrel which he had waged, years before, with all that was dearest to him, he had done to nothing else such deadly hurt as to his own better nature.

Sorely wounded and bleeding, he had not dared to leave it to die unguarded, but had walled it up in a prison-house of pride and selfishness, lest haply he might feel within it some stir of reviving life and warmth. Whatever shadow he had cast on other lives, he had blighted none so utterly as his own. Even he knew that, sitting still to-night, and accepted the knowledge with a certain defiant bitterness.

A merry peal of bells from some neighboring church-tower came to his ear, mingled with the hurrying tread of the passers outside, and he remembered suddenly that it was Christmas-eve. His face changed for an instant; perhaps some tender thread out of the past was tugging uneasily at his heart. If it were so he snapped it with a resolute hand, and turning toward the light began to read. It was an old, cold book of philosophy (?) which he opened, yellow and worn with frequent use.

John Warder could read such words as these on Christmas-eve!

"Since God, if there be a God, hath withdrawn himself far away from his works, within the impenetrability of his own essence, leaving the elements of evil let loose in this lower world to compass in the end dire confusion and ruin, or haply to work out their own elimination, every soul shall sustain the results of its own action, and the presumption of a supra-human redemptive agency is no more than the thin figment of an enthusiastic imagination."

As his eye lingered on the closing words of the paragraph there was a sudden, sharp ring at the street-door. No one seemed to answer the summons, and directly there was a second ring, more prolonged and importunate than the first. At the sound he recollected that there was no one in the house besides himself, old Mrs. Hall, the housekeeper, having gone to superintend the decoration of a Christmas-tree for her grandchildren, and taken Peggy, her little handmaiden, with her. With an expression of impatience he laid aside his book and went down stairs, but on throwing open the door started with surprise to find no one standing without.

"Some rogue of a boy has played me a trick," he said to himself, looking up and down the street; but while the words were yet on his lips, the faintest possible rustle at his feet made him look downward. There on the broad door-stone stood a large covered wicker-basket, half-hidden in the shadow of the wall. Slowly and cautiously he lifted it inside, and as he closed the door behind him the figure of a woman rose up from a crouching posture in the darkness not far off, seemed to listen a while at the door, and then flitted hurriedly away.

In the light of the hall-lamp John Warder lifted the cover of the basket. No more than a bundle of flannel appeared at first, but its folds moved gently as if to the regular breathing of a sleeping child. With a trembling eagerness to which he had long been unused, he drew aside the careful covering and disclosed a little face set in fair curls, and rosy with the sweet sleep of infancy. While he looked the little one stirred uneasily as if about to waken, and with a strangely-mingled feeling of haste and helplessness he rushed up stairs to the library again, carrying the basket in his hands. He sat down upon a low settle before the open hearth and lifted out the babe, a little girl, perhaps eight months old. She was quite awake now, but she did not cry, as he had expected. She looked all about the room, taking in her new surroundings with wide, wondering eyes; at last, swaying slowly backward, she looked up into his face with a long, questioning gaze, which grew momentarily more self-possessed, as if she were trying his very soul before the tribunal of her pure judgment. Perhaps her baby instinct penetrated to the deep springs of tenderness in his nature, locked up so long within the icy incrustations of selfish stubbornness, for suddenly a sweet smile broke over her little features, and she held up both her tiny hands with a crow of delight. John Warder's heart swelled in a great human throb, and something like a tear gathered in his eye. He held the child close and kissed her, while she wound her fingers in his long beard, laughing gleefully. The very fire blazed up again as if in answer to the unwonted sound of baby-laughter in the house; and the child tried to grasp the flickering shadows, and stretched her pink toes in the ruddy glow. Warder was a wonder even to himself—he fondled her, danced her on his knee, called her pet names long-forgotten, and, wondering suddenly if she were in need of food, he set her on the carpet, with his heavy chain and seals for a plaything, then he went down stairs to grope his way through the pantry in search of milk and a cup in which to warm it at the coals.

When the baby had drank and played, and drank again, the long fringes began to droop over her violet eyes, slowly her curly head sank on his shoulder, and she was fast asleep. He laid her down upon the sofa, tucked up in wraps and pillows which he brought from his own sleeping-room; then he sat down beside her, and watched the long night through.

Some of the thoughts which came to him in that silence were known only to God and his own soul. All his past life moved before him like a panorama, and in the clear, wondrous light that shone upon it, and irradiated it through and through, he could not choose but see all things as they were—his own ingratitude and stubborn pride, the love he had crushed, the blessings he had thrown away. Once more he stood at the bedside of his dying mother, when she gave him, as her last trust, his little fair-haired sister, the child of her old age—just such a child as this babe might grow to be—saying, "John, you will be brother, father, and mother to her, all in one!" He remembered how the little May grew up, a sunshiny creature, making the house glad with her bird-like music and her winning ways; how she loved him, and hung about him with kisses and caresses when he came home at night; how proud he was of her beauty and her sparkling wit; the splendid match he planned for her; and then—oh beginning of dark days!—the time when a penniless clerk came between him and his cherished schemes, with nothing but his love and honest name to give her, yet daring to offer both; how she turned from the rich suitor to smile upon the poor; his own fierce anger; her gentle entreaties the day when he cursed her with cruel words, which he shuddered now to recall, and she rose up from his feet with the Warder pride in her pale, sorrowful face, and went out of his home, but oh! never—he knew it to-night!—never yet out of his heart. He remembered how, maddened by the news of her marriage, he had been guilty of a well-directed insinuation, which had lost her husband his situation. He had lost sight of them since; he had tried year by year to banish them from his thought; he did not know to-night if she were yet alive. The lonely years filed past him, in which the old home had grown still and dreary, while he stifled the yearnings of his heart and made no sign—years in which he had become more rich and powerful without, but always more lean and shriveled and bankrupt within.

His eye fell on the old book which he had read that evening, and he saw how he had dared to fill his exiled soul with the husks of willing doubts, denying God, and starving for the want of all that might have fed a higher life. Was there no hope? He turned to look at the babe sleeping still. The gray dawn of the new Christmas-day stole in between the heavy curtains, lighting up her face, and he thought—no doubting now!—how, eighteen hundred years ago, a little child was born, poor and friendless, like this one, heir to a heavenly throne, indeed, yet cradled in an earthly manger. "And they shall call his name Emmanuel, for he shall save his people from their sins." The words came like long-forgotten music—he had learned them to say at his mother's knee. While they still sang themselves over in his thought, the babe awoke and stretched her little hands to him, with a smile of recognition. John Warder had forgotten how to pray as others do; he could not shape his petitions according to the creeds of men; and yet I think that God met his broken, shame-faced soul, where it stood afar off, not daring to come nearer, and gave it, in the sweet confidence of the innocent child, the token at once of a shriving and a benediction.

Old Mrs. Hall, bustling into the library in the early morning, thinking to dust and put the room to rights before her master rose, started back upon the threshold as if she saw an apparition. Years after, when the lovely child was the light and joy of the reorganized household, she never tired of telling of that sight.

"I stopped as if I'd 'a been shot," she would say; "and there sot the purty creetur' in the middle of the sofy, and Master John a buildin' tents around her with the blankets and pillows, and then a divin' at her with his head, to make 'em tumble down again, and her a crowin' and laughin' and pullin' at his hair. 'A merry Christmas to you, Mrs. Hall!' says he; 'you didn't know what a Christmas gift we had las' night, did you?' And then he told me about the bell ringin', and the basket and all, and that I was to look out for a nurse-girl for the baby. Then, after he'd stopped a minute, says he, very soft like, 'We'll take good care of her, Mrs. Hall, and keep her in Miss May's place.' I was so struck that I couldn't speak a word, for in all the six year since Miss May went away we'd never durst to speak her name before him. 'Master John's a changed man,' I said to Peggy when I went down stairs; 'and if Miss May draws the breath o' life he'll find her—mark my word!—and he'll bring her back again!'"

John Warder thought as he walked down street that morning that the day had never been half so bright before, or the shop-windows so gay, or the faces he met so smiling and happy. Yesterday he would have shrunk within his great over-coat and behind his frosty muffler, intent only upon reaching his place of destination as quickly as he might; but now his look and mien so accorded with the holiday that some little boys ran up to him with a "Merry Christmas, Sir!" and he actually drew off his great fur gloves to feel in his pocket for some pennies to give them. Then he stepped inside a toy-shop, where a crowd of people were gayly chatting and handling the fancy wares, and bought a baby's rattle—a bright thing with gilded chains and tinkling bells. As sometimes, in New England, a single day of driving wind and rain will swell the slender mountain streams to noisy torrents, and carry off the accumulated ice and snow of the long, frozen winter, so the melting process once begun in John Warder's heart had swift and resistless way.

Some procession was marching up the street with floating banners, and he stepped into a fruiterer's shop to wait until they should have passed by. A woman stood before the counter in an old and faded cloak, her face turned away. She held a bunch of grapes in her thin hand.

"You have none cheaper?" she was saying. Something in the voice made him start.

"A dollar and a half a pound, ma'am—you can't expect them for less at this season," was the answer, in a careless tone, as if the shopkeeper anticipated but little profit from his customer.

"Could you give me ten cents' worth?"

"I suppose I *could*, but they're hardly worth the trouble of weighing," said the man, roughly; and at the words the woman turned with a quick, hurt motion, her lips trembling, and her face contracted with pain—a young face, thin and worn, but wearing traces of great delicacy and beauty.

Warder was at her side in an instant—he grasped her arm with breathless eagerness, making her look up into his face. Her own turned white as death, she gasped and would have fallen, but he caught her in his arms. "Oh, little May!" he said, with a great sob; then mindful of the curious gazers who began to gather around them, he half carried, half led her out, and, beckoning to a carriage waiting near by, lifted her inside and sat down, still supporting her in his arms.

"May! May! my darling!" he whispered, "speak to me—forgive me!"

"John! my own brother!" and she drew down his face and kissed him on the lips.

Few words were spoken at first; there was no noisy demonstration. The current of such emotion runs deep, indeed, but it is still.

"God sent a little child last night to be my teacher," he said at length, but ceased suddenly as a swift flush dyed her face.

"It was yours!" he cried.

"It *was* mine!" answered the mother. "Oh, John! it was a hard thing to do, and harder even for—for my husband, John—than for me; but my first two babes lie in their little graves, and now the foul air and unwholesome living were withering my tender little flower. I thought perhaps you would not reject her; I watched till I saw you take her in with your own hands. I never meant to let you know until some time when she had come to be to you what—what I was once, dear John, and then I thought perhaps—perhaps a little of the old love might live again through the new!"

He did not answer, only held her closer—closer.

"Where are we going?" she asked, anxiously.

"Home, May!"

"Oh, John! I can not! I can not! My poor husband! You must let me go to him now, this moment! He lies sick and helpless, and I have been gone so long already!"

"Your address, May!"

She gave it, and when he had directed the cabman he drew forth, by a few sweeping questions, the condensed history of six years.

"Walter was turned away from his situation soon after we were married," she said; "we never knew why, for he had done his duty faithfully. He tried vainly to find another without recommendations, and, discouraged at last, we left the city, and he found a little farm to work at shares. Our first years were very happy, for we did not mind poverty or toil while there was strength to meet them; but Walter's constitution was not firm enough for the hard life, and at last he sickened. Little Johnnie was three years old then, and Alice a baby of six months. Walter was ill so long that the land had to be given up, and then came sore troubles. The children took scarlet-fever; I watched them day and night; but God called them—both our lambs to the upper fold. We tried not to murmur, but oh, John! the loneliness that came after! Walter has never been well since; three months' work has often disabled him for twice that length of time. We came back to town, hoping that he could find lighter work, but he has been more ill than ever. Sometimes I despair of his life."

"Oh, May!" groaned her brother; "he must live! God will not make my punishment more than I can bear!"

The carriage was stopping now at the entrance of one of those great human hives, the tenement-houses of New York. Warder ordered the carriage to wait, then he followed his sister up the long flights of stairs to the poor room she called her home.

There was a wonderful Christmas dinner at John Warder's that day. Mrs. Hall laid the table in the library, so that the invalid, who lay there on a cot-bed, with a bright, restful smile on his thin face, might not be for a moment exiled from the circle. May was constantly making short pilgrimages through the house, with childish eagerness reviewing the familiar rooms, and coming back to sit beside her husband, holding his hand, and tracing in his animated face the promise of new health and strength—a promise which the weeks and months would not linger to fulfill.

But the baby! John Warder would not spare her even to her mother; he held her on his knee at table, and grudged the unconscious moments of her after-dinner nap. "You can not take her back, May," he said, solemnly; "she is mine!—not your gift to me, but God's!"

TOUCHED TO THE HEART.

I'm not a romantic man, and, if I had had any leaning in that direction, a few Monday morning visits and reprimands from the board of directors would soon have cured me of the failing; but somehow or another I have found out that railway men are made of the same stuff as other men, and have hearts under their uniform-coats.

It was no business of mine, if, while I was at the London terminus of the Great Dividend and Longshare Railway, I examined the tickets and unlocked the carriages on the departure platform—it was no business of mine if a tall, fair girl, in deep mourning, came twice a week regularly, and showed me her ticket for Westgate, return, second-class. But somehow it seemed to be my business, when I had unlocked an empty carriage and handed her in as well as I could, that I should lock that door again without banging it, and then take care that no one else went in but lady-like females. Of course I could not help it, but from the very first day—cold, winterly day—when, thinly dressed, she came shivering along the platform, I seemed to have some strange interest in her; and, as the weeks slipped by, I found myself looking out for her regularly. It was easy to see, from the music-roll she carried and the return ticket, that she went down the line to give lessons.

I called myself a fool, and thought of my salary as a guard, and my position in life as compared with the graceful, lady-like girl who used to come floating along toward me every Monday and Wednesday morning, looking so pale and sad and care-worn that I first began by pitying her, and then—well, never mind now.

One cold December day I was shifted for a week on to the arrival platform, and so missed seeing her leave; but I carefully watched every train that came in till I saw her get out. Without seeing me she hurried away. Well, there was nothing to sigh for there, you'll say; but I did sigh all the same, and was turning away, when I saw the searching porter with a music-roll in his hand, which some one had left in a carriage.

"Here! I know who that belongs to," I said, snatching it from him; and then, seeing that he was going to make a bother, I slipped a sixpence into his hand, and ran out of the station.

Just in time: I could see her at the bottom of the street, and, catching hold of one of the boys hanging about for a job, I pointed the tall figure out, and told him to follow her to where she lived, and come back and tell me.

And not send the music-roll? No; I meant to take that. I did not know why, but there seemed something pleasant in the idea of being servant to her, and waiting on her; and I kept telling myself so as I walked back to attend to my duty.

Next morning I was in a quiet, shabby, lodging-letting place leading out of Gower Street North, with the music-roll in my hand, looking out for No. 21. It was easy enough to find, but something seemed to make me walk past two or three times before I could summon courage to go up and ring. But at last I did, thinking how foolish it was, when I only had to deliver the lost parcel, and come away.

So I rang gently, and waited; rang again, and waited; and then a red-faced woman came to the door.

"You have a young lady who teaches music—"

"Second-floor front," she said, snappishly. "Why don't you knock twice? Bell's for the ground-floor. There, go up!"

I took off my cap, wiped my shoes, and feeling ashamed of my uniform for the first time in my life, went slowly up to the second-floor, and then stopped; for I could hear a piano, and the sweetest voice I ever heard was singing to it in a low tone. I stopped, listening and drinking in the sweet sounds with my heart beating heavily, for it was a long way up; and I should have stopped longer, had I not heard some one coming up the stairs. Then I knocked, and a voice cried, "Come in!"

I turned the handle two or three times for it was old and worn, and then, entering, stood blushing like a great girl, and trembling before the tall pale lady and some one lying upon a sofa in front of a very miserable fire.

Such a bare, chilly room, and so cold and pale both the inmates looked, as I stood observing all I could in the first glance.

"Oh, mamma, the music!" cried the pale girl, rising from her seat by the piano, and running toward me; and then, as I clumsily held it out, I saw that I was recognized, as she thanked me for bringing it, and also for what she called my kindness at the station.

"Ask him to take a glass of wine, Louise," said the lady on the sofa, when I saw the color flush in her daughter's cheek, as she said, hastily,

"I think, mamma, we have none in the house."

I clumsily protested that I would rather not take any wine, and was backing toward the door, when a sudden pain shot through me, for I had detected a motion on the part of the pale girl, and caught sight of a shilling in her hand. I suppose I showed what I felt, for she paused and colored deeply, and as I stood outside she once more thanked me, and passed the shilling hastily into her left hand, and held out the right to me.

I have some recollection of having taken it, and pressed it to my quivering lips, and then I was blundering along the streets in a sort of wild dream, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, but apparently lost.

The days went on till Christmas-eve. I had watched for her next coming to the station, and, as usual, seen to the carriage in which she went. I knew that I had nothing to hope for, being only a railway servant, and she a lady; but for all that it seemed my duty to watch over her, though since the day I returned the folio her bows had

been a little more distant, and she had hurried into the carriage.

But it was Christmas-eve, and all through that week I had not seen her. "Holidays," I said to myself, and then tried to be as busy as possible, to keep myself from thinking that it would be perhaps a month or six weeks before I saw her again. But there was no fear of my not being busy, for most people know what sort of a Christmas railway servants keep—all hurry, drive, bustle, worry, and rush. Dull, heavy weather it was, yellow fog and driving snow. The trains came in covered with white, which slowly thawed and dripped off, so that the terminus was wet, and cold, and miserably dirty. People didn't seem to mind it, though; for the station was thronged with comers and goers—friends coming to meet those from the country, and as many coming to see others off. "By yer leave," it was all day long, as the barrows full of parcels and luggage were run here and there along the platform. The place seemed alive with fish-baskets, oyster-barrels, and poultry; while somehow or another, from the poorest and shabbiest third-class people up to the grandees of the first class, every one looked happy and comfortable.

So there I was at it, helping to get train after train off—all late, of course; for, do what you would, there was no finding room enough for the people, and so it got to be past four, with the gas all alight and the snow and fog thicker than ever. A train was just starting, when there was a bit of confusion at the door. Some one shouts "Hold hard!" and then from where I was—some distance up the platform—I saw a gentleman hurry up to a first-class carriage, almost dragging a lady with him—a lady in black. Before any body could stop him he had opened the door, pushed her in, and then followed, just as the train began gliding off.

This happened to be a carriage just put on, and the compartment the gentleman entered was locked;. but he had one of the pocket railway-keys, for before the carriage reached where I stood, with my heart somehow beating very strangely, I saw his hand out of the window, locking the door again. In the momentary glance I caught, as the lamps of the station flashed into the carriage, I could see that there was no light inside, while two little gloved hands pressed down the window the man tried to draw up; and there, pale and horror-stricken, eyes starting, and lips open, as if she were crying "Help!" I saw the face of the young governess.

The time did not appear long enough to see so much, but I saw all that, and my mind seemed to keep up with my eyes and explain it all; and I knew that there was some infernal piece of villainy on the way.

"What to do?" seemed rushing through my mind, as in the agony I felt I turned all of a tremble. Telegraph to the station in front to stop the train, which was the express, with fifty miles to run before pulling up?—send a special engine and tender after them? How could I do either on my own responsibility, and only on suspicion? Should I go and report it? I should have half an hour wasted in questioning, and then perhaps be told that it was time enough to act when there was proved ground to work upon. And what had I to advance? Nothing but that appealing look for aid from her I loved.

"Her I loved!" Yes, I knew it now; and I knew, too, that to be of service, I must act—act at the risk of life or limb. I thought all this, running after the train, fast gliding along past the platform.

I had lost too much time already as I darted along, for in a few more seconds it would have been impossible to overtake the fast-receding carriages. There was a shouting behind me as I ran; one porter stood right in my way looking after the red lights, and in passing, I knocked him over. The platform past, and bounding along the incline at the end, I was out in the snowy night, when I tripped over one of the point handles, and fell heavily, uttering a cry of despair; but I was up again directly, and running along the rough line amidst crossing metals and rods that threatened to throw me every instant.

It seemed the act of a madman to run now, for the red lights were some distance ahead, and gradually growing dim and blurry amidst the fog; but through the thick snow I ran panting on, with my breath coming shorter and heavier, and a hot, burning sensation at my chest, while it seemed that I could taste blood, though my mouth was dry and hot.

All at once my heart leaped and every nerve tingled. From the fast-vanishing train came a long shrill whistle, which I knew well enough meant red signals in front, while, to my unutterable joy, the end lamps of the guard's van showed plainer and plainer as I panted on.

Another stumble and fall over the point rods—and I was up again, heedless that my hands and forehead were bleeding, and that I had lost my cap. There were the lamps plainer and plainer, for the train had almost stopped; but now, a hundred yards ahead, could I overtake it before it started again? The suspense was horrible, I felt my head swim as I panted on.

Fifty yards passed, and the red lamps still receding, but bigger and less dim. On still, gasping and choking, and drawing my breath with difficulty. Not twenty rods off, and, if I could have run, another few seconds would have seen me holding on by a carriage handle; but I could only go at a heavy trot.

"Bang! bang!" went a couple of fog-signals, and hope rose again as the engine slackened pace once more, and, almost at a walk, I panted on—nearer, nearer, nearer—the red lights growing brighter and plainer; and at last, just as the engine gave a final shriek and dashed on all clear, I laid my hand on the red bull's-eye, and the next moment was sitting clinging to the foot-board of the guard's van.

The fog had been my friend. In another few seconds I must have dropped; while, in an ordinary way, the train would have been miles down the line by this time.

"Bang! bang!" went the fog-signals again, as I sat helplessly there, with my legs drawn up, and again we slackened for a few seconds; but all clear once more, and we were dashing on, and fast getting into full swing as I rose up, and, opening the door, stood with the guard of the train.

"Pooh! nonsense!" he said. "You're mad. I sha'n't stop the train."

"Then I shall," I shouted, making toward the wheel connected with the gong upon the engine.

"Not if I know it, you won't," he said, stopping me.

I was too weak and done up to scuffle with him.

"Will you come with me to the next carriage, then?" I said.

He only shook his head.

"Will you lend me your key?" I said; for I had dropped my own when I fell.

He shook his head again, and then it struck me that perhaps he might stop me, seeing how rough and wild and excited I looked. I backed slowly toward the door, facing him all the time. He told me afterward, if he had not felt afraid, he would have pinned me while I turned my back.

But I didn't turn my back, and the next moment I was outside on the long step, clinging to the door-handle, and with the guard leaning out and watching me.

"Come back!" he shouted, as we dashed along at full speed now, rushing through the darkness ahead, and giving a wild shriek as we passed a station, the lights looking like one streak. There were the carriages shaking and the wind tearing at me as if to beat me off; but I was recovering myself fast, and in a few moments I was at the end of the guard's van, leaning toward the carriage I wanted to reach.

So far my task had been easy, though, of course, very dangerous, with the train dashing along at fifty miles an hour; but now there was a gap to pass between the van and the carriage, for the buffers keep the carriages at some distance apart. For a few moments I stopped in dread, but, as I got my breath more and more, courage and the recollection of her wild appealing face came to me, and, clinging to the buffers, I contrived to get one foot on to the step of the carriage, and, still holding on by the iron, tried to get the other there.

Just then the train gave a jerk, and I thought it was all over; but the next moment I was on the step, and had hold of the door-handle.

"At last," I muttered, as I drew myself up on to the next step, and tried the door, which was, as I expected, fast. Then I looked back. There was the guard, with half his body out, and his hand screening his eyes, trying to follow my motions; but, with the darkness all round, the snow cutting by like knives and points, and the dense fog-clouds we kept entering, I felt sure he could not see me, though I could make him out from the light in his compartment. Then I listened, and my heart seemed to stand still; for I fancied I could hear the sound of a struggle going on inside, though I was not sure, from the rattling made by the train. I was not wasting time, for I had tried to look in at the window; and, after opening my knife with my teeth, was trying to open the door. But the interior of the carriage was dark as pitch, and my knife was useless, while now I was sure there was a struggle going on inside. Directly after, one of the little side panes of glass was broken, and I heard a faint cry.

I dashed in the door-window in an instant, cutting my hands with the thick glass, and then, beating out the loose pieces, made a place for entrance, and had half my body in before I felt myself seized by some one who tried to force me back.

Two hands held me by the throat, while I grasped the door with one hand, half in and half out of the carriage. My blood was up. I had hold of my unseen enemy by the collar, and I dug my knuckles into his neck as I held on for life like a bull-dog.

I had the advantage of him there, for, while I had on a stiff collar and buttoned-up uniform-coat, he had only a thin dress shirt-collar, and one of those black wisps of ties. It was a struggle for life and death with me, but I got further and further in. At last, I suppose, feeling half choked, he started back and drew me with him, so that I fell heavily on the floor.

Here, though, I lost my hold, and he had me again at a disadvantage. For what seemed a good five minutes, it was an up and down struggle, while more than once I felt myself dashed against somebody who was crouching in a corner of the carriage.

Sometimes I got the better and sometimes the worst off. After the struggle had been going on some time, it seemed that the far door was open, and that there was no one else in the carriage but us two, hanging on to one another like a pair of wild beasts. Then came such a horrible reaction that my strength seemed to leave me, for I felt that in her fear and dread the poor girl had leaped out.

But she had not, for she was outside, clinging for life to the handles, as in one brief glance I saw by the end light of the train flashing upon her. In a last fierce struggle my foot tripped, and I and the man I was struggling with fell headlong out of the door. There was a flash of light, the sound of rushing wind, and then I seemed to be dashed with fearful violence upon the ground.

The next thing I recollect is the sound of voices, and the hissing of the steam of an engine close by me, while some two or three people were moving about with lanterns. I found some one supporting my head; and then I gave a shudder, for there were horrible red patches and marks on the white ground. As the men spoke in whispers, I could see they were collecting together something horrible, that steamed in the cold air. A mist came over me, and I fainted dead away.

When I could think again, I found that I had been some time in a London hospital, and was lying there in a ward, looking at a pair of soft white hands that didn't seem to belong to me, while my head felt cool through my hair being cut off.

But I got stronger every day, and soon I had visitors to see me; and one face that came, and used to lean over my poor bare pallet, was, as it were, the face of an angel—so sweet, so loving, and so tender in its compassionate look; and once, while the old lady stood back, two tiny soft hands smoothed my pillow, and a tear fell on my cheek, as a voice whispered:

"God bless you, my brave preserver!"

I shut my eyes then, and trembled, for there was a bitter feeling of sorrow came over me, and in spite of those tender words, I seemed to be standing on the brink of a great gulf, far away from her.

As I grew stronger I learned from her mother how they had been deceived. It was through answering an advertisement for a governess that the poor girl had met with insult. She had been deluded into accompanying the gentleman, under pretense of his taking her to his home, a few miles down the line. He had paid the penalty of the crime he had meditated with his life. An up-train tore him to pieces—an up-train which must have passed within a few inches of my head.

The train from which we fell had been stopped by the guard a few miles further down, when the poor girl was found clinging outside the carriage. An engine and tender were sent back in search of us, to find us as I have already told.

I only saw her once again, when she gave me this—this little purse, just as you see. She spoke to me kindly and tenderly, and they were words of praise, I think; but I saw her only through a mist, and the thought that it was for the last time seemed to fill my mind so that I could only speak huskily. I kissed one of her hands as she said "Good-by;" and then I was standing alone—alone in the world, without aim or hope. You will please to remember that she was a lady, and that I am—only a railway servant.

HOME AND FOREIGN GOSSIP.

HAS your boy a pair of skates? and is he gathering strength and vigor these cold, bright, winter days from delightful recreation on the ice? If not, and you are undecided what to get as a Christmas gift, pause a little before you spend all your money in buying house toys, which will only keep him cooped up by the fireside during his play hours. Get him a pair of skates, and do your best to make some arrangement for him to use them as often as possible. And get another pair if your boy has a sister big enough to go with him; and by all means get a third pair for yourself and have a good time with the children.

The truth is that city boys and girls do not have half the vigorous outdoor exercise that young and growing human beings require. They walk demurely in the streets, and ride in the cars, but how much does that do toward stirring up the blood into healthful action? The many pale, thin, young faces we meet indicate that all who live in the city, especially young folks, need to avail themselves of every opportunity to breathe good, fresh air, and to give the body wholesome exercise.

The Central Park affords excellent facilities for skating. It has four ponds—the large one at One Hundred-and-Tenth Street, the one at the intersection of Seventy-Second Street and Eighth Avenue, the Sixth Avenue and Fifty-Ninth Street pond, and what is called the Conservatory Pond, Seventieth Street and Fifth Avenue. These ponds are kept in the best possible order by the Park Commissioners, every precaution against accident is taken, commodious buildings for shelter and refreshment have been erected, skates can be hired by the hour, and attendants are ready to give any desired assistance. A plan has been projected by which the extra snow, which the skaters don't want, is to be packed upon the hill-sides at each end of the Park, so that the little folks who have sleds can enjoy something analogous to country coasting.

In addition to these free ponds there are several private ones, where pleasant and convenient arrangements are made for those who desire the use of them. Two or three of these are situated on Fifth Avenue, between Forty-fifth and Forty-eighth streets, and Fifty-eighth and Fifty-ninth streets. A series of skating excursions to the Jerome Park Skating Pond is also announced, and will doubtless afford to many a real and wholesome treat.

What a consolation it must be to the nine persons who were blown up in South Bergen the other day to be assured by the ablest scientific men in the country that nitro-glycerine is not such a very dangerous compound, and that in proper hands it may be used with comparative safety! And what a comfort to their friends to understand definitely that in this particular instance the explosion was caused by the pressure of frozen glycerine at the orifice of the can, *and* the introduction of hot iron into the can!

The admirers of Charles Dickens's writings find themselves fascinated in a strange manner as they take one of his books and sit down in a corner to read it quietly by themselves. They can not themselves understand what it is that so moves them to sympathy with the writer; but some link connects them to him closely, and they are moved as he is moved. And to hear one who has touched the deepest springs of emotion in the human heart through the medium of words *read* some of the choicest of his own productions is an event to be remembered with great pleasure. Mr. Dickens's appearance before an audience is quiet and unpretending, his dress plain and simple. His voice is not strong; and notwithstanding a favorable seat, and the hush that fell upon the audience at the first sound of his voice, we found it not always easy to catch every word. Yet the voice is sympathetic and well-modulated; and the dramatic action, including change of tone, gestures, and variations in the muscles of the face, is admirable. When he is reading pathetic passages you are so touched that you believe he is most effective in those; but in three minutes you are heartily laughing at the irresistible humor of some description, or the comic effect of some tone, or movement, or single look. You do not feel that you are listening to a set reading—for Mr. Dickens is not at all confined to the little book whose leaves he turns from time to time with his left hand—but rather to a charming story, told in a most natural and vivacious manner. Mr. Dickens has been received with great enthusiasm in New York. Those who have been fortunate enough to hear him read consider themselves lucky; and those who tried in vain to obtain tickets *hope* there may yet be another chance for them. There is no question but that he would draw appreciative and delighted audiences if he should continue his readings all winter.

From the sanitary reports of the six months ending November 1, 1867, it appears that no less than 6434 infants died in this city before reaching their second year, and more than half of this number perished ere the first anniversary of their birth was reached. Every summer there is a fearful slaughter of infants in New York. Bad air, improper and insufficient food, and want of cleanliness are the chief causes.

Some four years ago, according to report, a colony of gipsies came to this country from England. In the process of time a portion of them encamped in the woods at Flushing; but the approach of winter warned them that warmer quarters were requisite, and a short time since they sought shelter in some cottages on Flushing Avenue. And it is also said that some of these gipsies are soon to remove from Brooklyn to New York City. These strange people live in rude and simple style, eating, talking, and telling fortunes being their principal business. Indeed some of them make a good thing of fortune-telling; and stealing, which is usually regarded as a necessary characteristic of the race, is quite needless. In fact, they have, so far as has been ascertained, conducted themselves in a very exemplary manner; and their more civilized neighbors, who at first experienced a panic in regard to their own safety and that of their goods, have settled down into a calm and comfortable frame of mind. The gipsies are profoundly ignorant, and seem to fear the influence of education and civilization—at any rate they insist on isolating themselves from all contact with people in general.

The walking-fever has reached the following point, which may be safely regarded as the crisis. An amateur pedestrian makes the following offer: "I will walk with any good-looking girl, who has a fortune in her own right, upon any given moonlight night, both parties to go as slow as they please, and neither to hurry back to the starting-point. I will then, on the word, walk into her affections, and walk off with her fortune."

Henceforth whoever picks chicken-bones with his fingers may be considered as quite *au fait*. We presume the same is as true of turkey-bones, or partridge-bones, but we should not like to speak positively in regard to them. Our authority for the chicken-bone fashion is no less a personage than the Austrian Emperor. It is reported by the court chroniclers that during his late visit to Paris the Emperor, at a very grand dinner, picked chicken-bones with his fingers. It has often been remarked that any person of good *taste* can set a fashion—so we suppose this fashion is "set."

A "countryman" of Tim Donovan's was severely hurt. The doctors said he had "a compound comminuted contused fracture of the 'tibula,' a stellated fracture of the cranium, and abrasion of the *os frontis*." Tim listened, awe-stricken. And when his wife asked how the injured man was: "Bad enough!" said Tim. "Bad enough! The docthors (Heaven be praised for larnin'!) have towld me all about it. He's a dead man! All his Latin parts are wounded, and he won't live foive minits!"

It seems that rats obtained admission to the Paris Exhibition without any tickets. During the recent removal of articles from one of the sections, a workman called on one of his comrades to assist him in lifting an immense cheese, which had stood against a wall, into a packing-case; the men stooped and put out all their strength, but what was their surprise to find that the article was as light as a drum. A family of rats had installed themselves in it, and nothing but a mere shell remained.

Eight cities in Europe have streets named in honor of President Lincoln, so it is stated.

Romantic weddings are frequent enough nowadays; but years ago they might not have been so common. An anecdote is told of Dean Swift, who being overtaken by a thunder-shower one day, took shelter under a tree, where he found a party of young girls waiting for the rain to cease. One young girl was weeping, and the Dean learned that she was on her way to church to be married to a young man who was with her. "Never mind, I'll marry you," said the Dean; and took out his prayer-book, and there and then performed the ceremony; and to make the thing complete, he tore a leaf from his pocket-book, and with his pencil wrote and signed a certificate, which he handed to the bride. It was as follows:

Under a tree in stormy weather,
I married this man and woman together.
Let none but Him who rules the thunder,
Sever this man and woman asunder.

JONATHAN SWIFT,
Dean of St. Patrick's.

Loud talking and laughing, whether in the social circle, in the public car or street, in the painting gallery or in the restaurant, is not an indication of good-breeding. And Americans are often criticised on this very point, especially when in foreign countries. Some Americans—cultivated and refined they were too—were introduced by letter to a London gentleman, who made a dinner-party for them, composed mostly of their countrymen. In speaking of it afterward, he remarked that "they laughed and talked so loud that he was afraid the police would come in and see what the row was." It is not unfrequently the case that a party of two or three enter a public car, and chatter and laugh in an unpleasantly loud manner, without apparently the least conception that their conduct is disagreeable to others, and very far from being in good taste.

A mendicant, living alone in a wretched hut at Courbevoie, near Paris, in abject misery and intolerable privations, was lately found dead on the floor of his filthy hovel. He had been in the habit of receiving the food charitably offered him by a neighbor through an aperture in the door of his miserable hut. A medical examination proved that the man had died of starvation. A sum of thirty francs in copper coin having been accidentally found in this abode of human misery, a further search was made, and immediately under the roof was discovered, carefully wrapped up in many folds of dirty rags, no less than 18,000 francs in gold (£720).

"MARY WITH THE CHILD JESUS."—By Murillo.—[See First Page.]

CHRISTMAS MORNING—AWAKING.—[See First Page.]

PLAYING FOR HIGH STAKES.

By MISS ANNIE THOMAS,

Author of "Denis Donne," "Walter Goring," "Played Out," etc.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"WHO COULD IT BE?"

IT was a long time before Edgar Talbot could make up his mind to go and see his brother and Blanche together as man and wife. Her turning from him in his trouble to Lionel had embittered Edgar Talbot very much; and as he was fully aware of the force of his bitterness and of its injustice, he would not go near them while he could stay away. But when Beatrix came up on a visit to the bride just before she became a bride herself, there was just so much courteous coercion used in the matter of inviting him as compelled him to go to the inaccessible suburb and see them.

Out of genuine good feeling for the man who might still be supposed to have rather a sore feeling about her, Blanche decided that Edgar should not find them alone. "Let us ask the Suttons and their Mr. Eldale and Miss Bowden to dinner to meet him, Lal," she said, suggestively; and when Lionel, who would have acquiesced in any proposition of hers, even if it had embraced inviting the moon and the stars to a family repast, when he nodded assent she added:

"Not to a swell turbot and Palestine soup and chablis and oyster dinner, you know, Lal; but I feel that a dinner is the only thing that will bring Edgar here comfortably."

So the invitations were sent and accepted, and then Blanche found that a dinner in theory is easier than a dinner in practice if the establishment be small. It was smooth sailing enough so long as she was saying what she would have, and how she would have it. But their one domestic was that most unmanageable of all animals, an obtuse human being, who would act on her own instincts, which were invariably bad. Accordingly Blanche's hopes of "things going off well" were much dashed during the morning.

"The table will look sweet—till the eatables come upon it," Blanche said to Trixy, "for Lal, in his character as artist, has picked up a quantity of quaint old German and Venetian glass; that with two or three flowers—"

"But where will you get the flowers and the wine for the old German and Venetian glasses?" Trixy asked, laughingly. "They won't walk in to see you by dinner-time, Blanche, and you haven't ordered them, have you?"

"No, I have not," Blanche said, candidly; "but ale and sherry won't taste the worse for being drunk out of antique goblets that are meant for hock and Champagne; as for the flowers—well, they are a difficulty, since I can't toil up to Covent Garden Market for them."

"I am afraid we must give up the flowers," Trixy said, pensively. "It is a pity, because, if other things fail, a rose is nice to look at."

"I haven't risked a failure," Blanche said; "soles can't be very badly fried, can they? unless they are spoiled by malice intent; and mutton can't be burnt in boiling; and the weakest-minded person can tell how long chickens ought to be roasting; as for the sweets, I shall tackle that part of the entertainment myself."

"It really is not worth the trouble," Beatrix said, languidly.

"No—you swell in anticipation; I quite agree with you as far as you're concerned," Blanche said, laughing; "but it's worth all the trouble I shall have, and a great deal more, if it brings Edgar among us comfortably again. Oh, if I had some flowers, what a sweet nook of a drawing-room I would make of this part of the room beyond the alcove! even you should not sigh for your palatial chambers, young lady."

"What shall you do, as we have no flowers?" Trixy asked.

"Oh, make the best of it; easy-chairs (we would have them when we were furnishing), and nuts, and sherry, and the strongest coffee, and the best intentions; when these pall upon our guests they may go home."

"You do make the best of things," Trixy said, in a sudden burst of good feeling. "Poor dear Blanche! ought you not to be writing?"

"Yes; I always ought to be writing—and I can't always be doing it. Now, Trixy, the present need is always the greatest to my mind; it's four, and they are coming at seven. Before that hour a complete transformation must be effected in my house and in my person; and Lal must not be disturbed through it at all; so for two hours I must be a house-maid."

As she spoke she put on a long brown holland apron with sleeves in it, and armed herself with a duster and a brush, and under the dextrous management of her supple hands the little room and the alcove beyond it soon assumed a different air.

"I always think it prettier to dine near to a window instead of in the middle of the room," she said, pulling the table to where the one who would sit at the head would be shrouded in the curtains; "and in our case beauty and expediency unite: it gives more space for the free movements of the excellent man who sold me my potatoes this morning and will serve them to us to-night."

Then she paused, out of breath a little with her exertions, and wished once more for a few flowers, to brighten that air of barrenness which might make Edgar think that there had been more haste than judgment in their marriage.

It was therefore no trifling pleasure to her, when she came down dressed at last to her little sitting-room, to find one of the chairs occupied by a trayful of choice flowers. As she bent over them, inhaling the sweetness of their blooms, the feeling of intense delight in having them at all overcame all curiosity as to how they came there. There would be nothing wanting so far as the pride of the eye was concerned, she felt, in a room adorned by these flowers. They would redeem it from all that plainness and sombreness which she had been feeling rather acutely this day. Then she remembered that she had no specimen-glasses, no three-tier vases—nothing which modern art has designed for the fitting holding of flowers. So she set to work at once to improvise something. Taking a soup-plate for the foundation, placing a lamp-stand in the middle of it, and putting a tall, old-fashioned ale-glass on the top of the lamp-stand, she achieved a very fair result. When the whole structure was decked with carefully-disposed flowers and a great deal of foliage the "fair result" became a glorious one.

She forgot how time was passing as she hung over her flowers, they were in such luxuriant masses, though it was mid-winter. She grouped them every where; it was the first pleasure of the kind she had had since she left the river-side hotel which had been the scene of her honeymoon happiness. An hour slipped away as she grouped crimson camellias with thin, dark, glossy green leaves, in small old china bowls on brackets against the white-watered paper. The plain, rather narrow white marble mantle-piece supported the broad, gorgeously-beautiful leaves of a rare foliage plant so excellently well that Blanche's love of the lovely kept her idly gazing far too long. Then suddenly a knock at the door startled her, and she stood still surrounded with unarranged flowers, waiting the advent of her guests. Feeling guiltily that she had neglected the prose of life for the poetry—knowing that she ought to have gone to the kitchen to see how matters progressed there—that she ought to have laid out Lionel's evening-dress for him—that, above all things, she ought not to have been surprised in this state of confusion by Mr. and Mrs. Sutton, now the hour she had named for dinner had fully come.

"Some good genius, knowing my love of flowers, has sent me a whole green-house, and I have been fascinated into forgetting how much room they take up," she said, apologetically, as Mrs. Sutton came into the room.

Perfect as Mrs. Sutton's tact was, she never would exert it for the purpose of making things pleasanter to Blanche. So now, when she saw that Blanche was embarrassed by being thus taken unawares, Marian added to that embarrassment to the best of her ability. She smiled a very faint smile as she gave her hand to Blanche, and muttered something relative to "fearing they had mistaken the hour."

"No, you have not," Blanche said, gathering up all her flowers as she spoke. "Dear me! where can Trixy and Lionel be? Do sit down in here" (she indicated the alcove), "and I will look for them; this" (laughing) "is our only drawing-room."

Mrs. Sutton glanced at the alcove, and then walked into it with a little sigh of resignation, and a slight movement of her shoulders which was not lost upon Blanche. Nor was it lost upon Miss Bowden, who deemed it the correct thing to follow in her aunt's footsteps and be supercilious too.

"Let me help you," Mark Sutton said, kindly taking the tray from Blanche; "where shall I put them?"

"You must not trouble yourself, Mr. Sutton."

"It's no trouble to help you, and you shouldn't treat us like strangers," Mark said; and then Mrs. Sutton made a remark to the effect that "really they could not complain of being treated too ceremoniously."

Blanche went up stairs considerably mortified at the untoward commencement of her well-meant entertainment. "I'm sure I did not mean to be pretentious or negligent," she thought, "and I seem to have been both." Then she knocked rather humbly at Trixy's door, and asked that young lady if she were "ready to go down and help to amuse Marian?"

"Are they come?"

"Yes—and caught me in confusion—arranging, oh! such lovely flowers."

"Where did you get them?" Beatrix asked, briskly coming to the door.

"I don't know at all. They came, sent by my kind star, I suppose; they're superb!"

"And you don't know who sent them?" Beatrix repeated, her pale face flushing a little; "that is singular."

Something in Trixy's tone made Blanche blush too as an idea smote her. Then she said, boldly:

"I have not thought so before, but now I think it must be Frank; do you know, Trixy?"

"Oh dear, no!" Trixy replied; "I know nothing about it. Yes, I am ready; I'll go down."

When she said that, Blanche went on to Lionel's room, feeling sadly that through no fault of hers Lionel's sisters were both antagonistic.

She got ample compensation from Lionel for all this worry and wear and tear of spirit. "My darling, don't distress yourself about what you can't help," he said, affectionately. "What if they did find you arranging your flowers, and if they have to wait half an hour for dinner? Because I can't give you an establishment, they don't expect my wife to be a slave. Come on; come down."

"In your velveteen, Lionel?"

"Why not?" he asked, laughing. "You say it's becoming and artistic, and I know it's comfortable. A dress-coat means so much more than we are going to give them that you must let me wear this."

So she said nothing more against it; and when they went down Mrs. Sutton said to Mr. Eldale, who arrived just at the moment, that she was sorry to see her brother had grown so negligent about conventionalities; "he used not to be—it comes from his having married a thorough Bohemian."

The whole party had assembled now, and still there were no signs of the approach of dinner. Blanche's heart began to go down; it seemed impossible to avert silence, and Edgar watched her closely. So, partly to create a diversion, and partly in pursuance of her plan of being perfectly open with regard to her relations with Frank Bathurst, she asked "if she had to thank him for the lovely flowers?" adding quickly, that "it was so kind and thoughtful to send them—just what she expected of him."

"Then I'm sorry to disappoint your expectations, Blanche," he said, gayly. "I never thought of them; I know nothing about them."

"Who could it be?" she asked, wonderingly looking round the little circle; and Mrs. Sutton replied:

"Some other thoughtful and considerate friend. How nice it must be for you, Lionel, to have a wife who is so warmly regarded! What lovely flowers you get!"

"Perhaps it's some hero-worshiper," Mr. Eldale suggested—"some one who has read your last work, and dares only to lay floral offerings at your shrine."

"Accept Mr. Eldale's reading of the mystery, Blanche. You will find compensation in it for your last bad review. It must be delightful to be an authoress."

Marian spoke very sweetly; but the dulcet tones did not conceal the latent sneer; and as Blanche crimsoned under the blow, Edgar Talbot said, quietly:

"Do not you be fired by the spirit of emulation, Marian. If you wrote from experience you would give us such hideous pictures of society that we should not like to show in it again."

"Mrs. Sutton would act the part of censor, then," Mr. Eldale said. He was the only one who was outside the pale of relationship. It was not pleasant to him, therefore, to hear the hard fraternal truths which were being told.

"Marian whipping the faults and follies of the age would be an improving spectacle," Edgar said, laughing.

"A panoramic view is not the best, I allow. One who had mingled in those faults and follies would whip them better than Mrs. Sutton," Mr. Eldale said, eagerly. "Do you remember what the stinging little poet wrote—

"'I know the thing that's most uncommon
(Envy, be silent, and attend);
I know a reasonable woman,
Handsome and witty, yet a friend.'

"'Has she no faults, then?' Envy says, Sir.
'Yes, she has one, I must aver:
When all the world conspires to praise her,
The woman's deaf, and does not hear.'"

"Your long quotation goes to prove that Pope had not Marian in his mind's eye when he wrote those lines," Edgar said; and Marian put in:

"If I were not so stupid I would say something neat about Edgar being so epigrammatic; but he might take me to task as to the exact meaning of the word, and that would be fatal."

Just as she said that the tardy dinner came, and poor Blanche partially recovered her spirits as she sat down to the table that seemed to be lacking in nothing by reason of the multitude of flowers that were upon it.

To narrate each little drawback to the perfect serving and ordering of this well-intentioned banquet would be to descend to dreary, dull details. Accordingly, though dreary, dull details make up a large portion of the sum of life for most, they shall not be dwelt upon here. It is enough to say that the dinner was not what it would have been had a French *chef* cooked and an attentive footman served it, and that the shadow of each shortcoming was mirrored in Blanche's face.

"The game has not been worth the candle," she thought, as she led the way up stairs to her own writing-room after dinner. "Marian despises it all; Edgar is cool to me and to his brother; and Trixy is put out by the flower mystery. Why should she suspect Frank of practicing such a small deception, and why should she mind it if he had sent them to me? people are very funny." As she thought this she tried to arrange three rather dissatisfied women in a small room containing one easy-chair, and the attempt was a failure.

"Thanks; it's hardly worth while my sitting down," Marian said, with ill-concealed rudeness; "we are so far from home that we must start soon."

"Don't you dislike having nothing but a blank wall to look at when you're writing, Mrs. Talbot?" Ellen Bowden asked, patronizingly.

"I don't think the view of the blank wall the loveliest in the world," Blanche said, good temperedly, "but when I am writing I have no time to look up."

"You haven't much time for any thing but writing, have you?" Mrs. Sutton asked, turning her head round over her shoulder to look at Blanche, with an air of constraining herself to take an interest in her hostess that was scarcely concealed.

"No; very little time for any thing but writing."

"Rather a bad thing for a married woman," Mrs. Sutton said, considerately; "if you can't look after things yourself, with Lionel's means, you will soon find yourself in an awkward position."

"I hope not," replied Blanche; "I hope not, for his sake much more than my own;" and she did not add that she was wearing out her youth and strength in trying to add to his means, as it was her pleasure and duty to do.

"Well," Marian said, "I have pointed out one element of success that is lacking in your books; if you take my advice you would be read by people who would not have your novels in their houses now. I often recommend your works—but it's no use."

Blanche bowed her head slightly in acknowledgment of the—insolence, for it was nothing less. How dared this woman come to her house and insult her in this way? It had indeed come to a strange pass when Blanche had to stand by and listen to Mrs. Mark Sutton's statement of how she had recommended Blanche's books, and heard them rejected, in silence.

Things were a little better when they all went back to the alcove that was her drawing-room; for by that time the men had warmed toward each other—and there was only about a quarter of an hour longer of each other's society to be endured. Then at length Edgar spoke to her.

"I have been fortunate since I saw you, Blanche," he said; "my dream of regaining all that I have lost is over; but I do look forward to being regarded as something better than the black sheep of the family again."

"I am very glad to hear you have been fortunate again—I won't call it being 'fortunate' only—to hear you have been better rewarded for your exertions."

"Can you guess what has been the first extravagance I have indulged in since my return of luck?"

She shook her head, and he turned round and took up a group of the rarest flowers which had been sent to her.

"I am glad you liked them," he said. "I shall come again, Blanche. I am working now to add to the happiness of others. I can face Lionel and you better than before."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

TRIXY'S SECRET.

THE description of one bridal has already been given in these pages; it would be scarcely fair to inflict another upon the reader. It is enough to say that Frank Bathurst and Beatrix were married—married under very different circumstances to those which attended the ceremony that made Lionel and Blanche man and wife; married, in spite of all Trixy's doubts and fears as to his love for her not being as powerful, perfect, and pure as hers was for him; married, and so, according to the ordinary routine of fiction, done for.

Their tour was a triumphant progress: a very different sort of affair to that quiet one which inaugurated wedded life for Mr. and Mrs. Lionel. Mr. Bathurst bore his wife to Rome, when she was made happy by the sight of the studio he had worked in with Lionel; when that close friendship with her brother had been formed which had ended in this—this happiness which she still regarded tremblingly, in terrible fear that something would come to mar it.

They were home again, back at beautiful, quiet Haldon, before that fear was realized. It was late in April, and in May they were going up to town for the season. The little cloud came from an unexpected quarter, from Mrs. Mark Sutton.

They were such early risers, and the post-office was so far from them, that they had generally finished breakfast and were walking about on the lawn between the house and the lake before the bag was brought in. At any rate they were doing so this day; and when Frank had taken out the contents of the bag they went down and sat under the tree under which Lionel and Blanche had lounged with them long ago, and sorted their several epistles, and began to read.

"A tolerable budget from Marian," Mr. Bathurst said, tossing a thick letter into his wife's lap; "she is sending you all the fashions, I should think."

"How dull she must be to send me such a long letter!" Beatrix said, laughing. Then she opened the envelope and began to read.

It was a long letter, a very long letter, and it need not be transcribed here in full. It commenced by Marian's telling Beatrix how grieved she was to pain any human being, much more "one whom she had always regarded as a sister." Mrs. Sutton was not above the vulgarity of dashing words on which she desired particular stress to be laid. Those that stand in inverted commas were triply underlined. Then she went on to say that Beatrix might have heard of old Mr. Talbot's will; she (Marian) would quote one sentence from it:

"To Marian Talbot, his eldest daughter, one thousand pounds and her mother's jewels."

The jewels were not worth much, excepting as articles of curiosity. They were too heavy in their barbaric massiveness to be agreeable to wear, but they were very curious. The bracelets, for instance, were some of them perfect little boxes. Marian had been amusing herself by looking them over and trying to find out secret springs in them lately, and she had succeeded, to her own sorrow (she begged Beatrix to remember always *very* much to her own sorrow), in lighting on such a secret as would be a spring of grief in the family.

Poor Trixy had read as far as this, when her husband finished his letters, and asked her "What on earth Marian could have found to spin such a yarn about?" "I don't know yet, Frank," she replied; "some 'secret' she says, but I have not come to it yet."

"I'll just stroll round to the stables," he said, rising up. "By the time I come back perhaps you will have come to it, dear." Then he walked away leisurely, and Trixy went on with her letter.

Presently her hands fell into her lap, and she threw her head up as if she wanted fresh air, and to face the worst. There was a hot flush on her brow and cheeks, and her eyes were flashing painfully. She had just read this paragraph—

"I am sure you will pity me for having been the one to find it, but my conscience will not allow me to conceal the truth from you now that I have discovered it. Whether I consent to conceal it from your husband will be a matter for after consideration. A paper that I found behind a spring in one of mamma's old bracelets proves that you are not my father's daughter. He knew it, and left you nothing, as you know. You had better write to me on the subject and say what you mean to do."

What she meant to do! It was hard indeed

to say what she meant to do—what there was left for her to do. Her first impulse was to tell this terrible thing to her husband, and leave him to direct her. Her next was to conceal it from him. Frank thought so very much of pure descent, and no one would be wronged by the concealment of the fact that she was basely born. Basely born! the mere utterance of the phrase to herself nearly crushed her to the earth! She could not tell Frank. She would write at once to Marian, and beg her, for the sake of all good womanly feeling, to keep this secret which could harm no one, and which, if made known to her (Trixy's) husband, might estrange him from her. That was the rock on which she split: her horrible dread that any thing might occur to estrange the man she worshiped from her. The feeling, good in itself, became of undue weight, and swayed her out of the right honest course.

She got up at last, pale enough now, pale and very miserable. A thousand doubts assailed her. She had been married as "Beatrix Talbot;" her marriage even might be invalid, since she had no right to the name. What if Frank should repudiate her for it! Men who had loved their wives far more passionately than her passionately-loved Frank had separated themselves from those wives for pride's sake, or ambition, or revenge. Frank was very proud. He might feel about his children, should she be blessed with any, that the mother had come across and marred the breed. There was only one thing for her to do, and that was to throw herself upon Marian's mercy.

She shuddered as she thought this, for she knew what Marian's tender mercies were likely to be were they very much needed. Still Marian could gain nothing by giving the secret forth, and she might gain something by keeping it. Then her spirit revolted at the notion of bribing any one, and she nearly decided upon taking the only safe path and telling her husband the sad truth, concerning which she was only unfortunate, not blamable. But again the dread of losing the smallest particle of his esteem and love, or of his pride in her, set in, and she felt that she dared not tell him.

How coldly Nature mocks such a social misery as this on a fair spring day in a beautiful country! The trees decked out in their earliest, loveliest green; the lake, whose silvery shimmer was only broken by the slow, majestic progress of the swans across it; the white cloud-flecked blue sky, the cooing wood-pigeon in the distance—none of these things were less fair or sweet to her because she was basely-born. Yet, in the eyes of her kind, she would be a different being should the truth get known.

But it should not get known. She quickened her steps almost to a run as she thought this. She would write her letter to Marian at once, get it off her mind, and then try to occupy herself with something that should take her thoughts off the subject till luncheon, when she could meet Frank with an unruffled brow, with her plumage in such order as he loved to see; in fact, when she should be so perfectly gay and bright that he should forget to question her about that luckless letter of the morning.

She wondered if this thing would ever be other than a gnawing pain to her—if she should ever forget it, or come to think lightly of it, or cease to tremble when the possibility of its being made public occurred to her. Her mother had been very cruel to leave this heritage of woe to her child, this lasting shame, this wound for which there was no balm!—very cruel to work such a change in any woman by her evil deeds, as Trixy saw with surprise was wrought in herself as she came into her room and faced herself in the glass. She was looking so pale and haggard that she began to dread the look that would come upon her husband's face when he saw her. The tears would fill her eyes and break from them, and tears always left their mark upon her for hours.

Her hand was shaking and her heart was swelling when she sat down to write to Marian. She made her appeal very briefly, very strongly, very earnestly. Since no one could lose by the terrible truth being withheld, and she might lose fearfully by its being given out, she implored that it might be withheld. And as she wrote she grew easier in mind, for she deemed that such an appeal from woman to woman must tell.

The letter was soon written, and then she arranged her hair freshly, and reorganized some of those delicate details of dress which give a new look to a woman. Then she took up some work and went down to the library, where she generally sat with her husband before luncheon, and found him turning over the papers, and rather disgusted with her for having staid away from him so long.

"What have you been about, child?" he asked, as she came in. "I went back to look for you by the lake, to hear the contents of that wonderful letter, and you had fled."

"And what did you do then?" she said; "sat down and smoked, I believe."

"Well, I did smoke, and thought what a bore it was that my wife was not there to read the papers to me: what have you been about?"

"This." She held up her hands, in which she held an ivory shuttle and a gold pin, and some fine cotton, to indicate that she was "tatting."

"What nonsense! what's the good of it?" he said, contemptuously.

"It trims things," she said.

"I have had a letter from Lal to-day," Frank then said; "he is very hopeful about his picture; it's accepted, and well hung, and Blanche has induced him to put a swinging long price on it."

"That's silly of her; she should have been contented with a moderate price."

"I advised her to advise Lal to do it."

"Still I think it silly," Trixy repeated; "it is so essential to their well-being that his pictures should sell at some price, that I think it silly to be exorbitant; his picture will be unsold at the end of the season."

"I tell you I advised her to urge him to do it," Frank said, quickly; "I shall take care that it does not remain unsold at the end of the season, for if no one else buys it I will."

"It's a pity you can't publish her books too," Trixy said, quietly; "what sums she would receive, and how many editions you would force them into, and what a success she would secure in the columns of the daily press!"

"She will have a better success than any one can make for her. Poor Blanche! I should like to see her on the top of the tree. Do you remember how Mrs. Sutton tried to crush her when we all dined there before we were married, by being fine and mighty? By-the-way, what does Marian say to you to-day?"

"Oh, Marian's letter would not interest you," Trixy replied, feeling dolefully the while what an agonizingly painful interest this letter would have for him.

"I beg your pardon; they do interest me intensely; they are perfect studies of conceit and selfishness. I look upon myself as defrauded of a very innocent amusement when you won't let me read Marian's letters."

"Now, Frank, if you say that, how can you expect I shall let you see my sister's letters?"

"My darling child, I always forget that you are sisters; and now I think about it, it's hard to realize that the same blood flows in your veins; I offer no slight to you in laughing at Marian; besides, why should you make yourself responsible for other people's sins?"

"Why, indeed?" Trixy sighed, trying hard as she spoke to seem very much absorbed in her tatting. Every one of the kindly sentences he had spoken had gone straight to her heart, cutting and lacerating it with the keen consciousness of the deception she was practicing upon him. She almost made up her mind to tell him at once; but she hesitated; and then the luncheon-bell rang, and the opportunity was lost.

When luncheon was over, she could not bear to mar the soft, smiling, quiet beauty of that spring afternoon, by referring to a disagreeable topic; so she tried hard to put the thought of that letter away from her own mind even, and to thoroughly enjoy the glorious present, when Frank said to her:

"Shall we go for a ride, Trixy? there are two or three picturesque, little, sequestered villages about here that I should like to show you; they are as lovely as any thing I have seen in Switzerland; will you come?"

"I shall enjoy a ride; yes, Frank."

"It will do you good, too; you're looking pale."

"I'm always pale," she said, quickly.

"But you're awfully pale to-day; get ready, dear, and we will start."

They were soon off; she on a horse whose canter was as the easy undulations of a rocking-chair, and Frank on a good strong roadster, who was highly accomplished in the matter of opening gates. For a time their course lay along the high-road, but at last they turned out of it on the brow of a hill, and rode down a steep narrow declivity, where the hedges rose so high above them that not even the fresh April air could be felt, and the stillness of the place was as the stillness of death.

"How completely out of the world! I can hardly imagine life and death going on here," Beatrix exclaimed, when they came at last to a village—or rather in sight of a couple of villages, for a narrow arm of a tidal river ran up and divided the two sets of houses, which bore respectively the names of Bosen and Cass. A rustic bridge crossed the water at its narrowest part; and on this they pulled up their horses, to take in what Frank declared to be the best view of the valley.

Quiet, intense quiet, that was its prevailing characteristic. The hills rose abruptly on either side of the valley, along the centre of which the river ran. For some little distance up the base of the hills, small houses crept and poised themselves in perilous places—or, at least, in places that seemed perilous when looked at from below. Round most of these cottages apple orchards, in full bloom now, were thickly clustered. Down quite in the hollow, a couple of houses, of rather more imposing aspect than the others, covered with pale pink monthly roses, and backed by stacks and farm buildings, gave out signs and sounds of agricultural occupation, in the lowing of cattle, the grunting of pigs, and the quick sharp cackle of geese and hens. Nearer to the bridge, boats turned keel upward, nets drying in the sun, and a few pilchard kegs and crab baskets, spoke of the chief trade of the quiet little place, that looked, as Beatrix said, "no more than a hole in the coast."

"It is out of the world," Frank said, after a pause. "I can hardly fancy social laws obtaining here, or social obligations being regarded; yet I can believe their lives are far more pure and moral than those led in more accessible places."

"Yes, I do believe a country life is that," Beatrix replied, absently. Then she roused herself, as some little children came out of a cottage near at hand, and added:

"Do look, Frank, what wonderfully pretty children! see that yellow-haired one, with those intensely blue eyes."

Frank stooped down and held out a penny toward the little one she indicated.

"Come here, little woman," he said, "the horse won't hurt you."

The child advanced with all the honest fearlessness of its age (it was only about three years old), took the penny, applied to it that invariable childish test, its tongue, and then made a sudden tumultuous tumbling little rush at the horse's leg, round which it clung confidingly.

"You pretty thing, take care!" Trixy cried. "Take it away," she added, looking round at a bigger child who had kept its distance contemplatively. But before she could be obeyed—before Frank could rescue it—all in one moment, as it seemed, the impatient horse struck out with its hoof, and the little child lay senseless and crushed on the ground.

As soon as she could conquer the sickening sensation which overwhelmed her for a moment or two, Beatrix sprang from her horse, and went up to take the child, that was already in her husband's arms. It felt limp and icily cold when she touched it, and she asked, in a faltering tone, "Is it dead?"

"No; I think not; but where can one get a doctor?—where's its mother? Some of you tell me where to take it!" he cried, as three or four of the idlers that apparently spring from nowhere in an instant, even in a deserted village, came round him.

In the broad accent of the county, which I can not do justice to in writing, he was directed to a little cottage close by; and there he wended his steps, his helpless little burden still quiet as one dead in his arms.

Beatrix followed him, quaking. Her great dread was the child's back was broken; it hung about as if it were boneless. What should they say to its mother? she thought. How should they ever make her understand how it happened, and how blameless Frank had been?

The cottage-door opened at their knock, and they went in on such a quiet scene. An elderly woman sat by the fire knitting; the hearth was trim and tidy; a few flowers in the window-sill let the light fall in flickeringly upon a table at which a young, hard-faced, handsome woman stood ironing. At one glance Beatrix recognized a likeness to the little injured child in this woman's face, bronzed as it was by exposure to the sun and wind. She had the same wonderful blue eyes, fringed on both lower and upper lid with black lashes. Her hair was auburn now, but yellow gleams through it proved that it had been golden as the child's. She was very handsome, very composed, until she saw what Frank carried; then she started, dropped her ironing-box, and came hurriedly to them.

"She has been knocked down by my horse," Frank said, gently; "she came and clasped its leg, and before I could save her, poor little darling, she was down."

"Thank you, Sir," the girl (she was scarcely more than a girl) said, taking her child from him.

"We are so grieved," Trixy said, softly. "You are its mother?"

"Yes, I am its mother," the girl said, blushing furiously. Then, while Trixy was marking that there was no wedding-ring on her finger, the elderly woman came up to them with a courtesy, and said, in a querulous tone:

"Yes, m'm, worse luck, for it's a chance child. Don't take on, Milly," she added, almost roughly, as the girl began to cry; "better for it to die than live, poor fatherless thing!" And the old woman looked for approbation of her sentiments toward the beautiful rich young lady who stood by.

For a moment Beatrix stood silent. Then, as the little child opened its eyes, and smiled and stretched itself, and they knew it had only been stunned, she went and knelt down by its mother's lap, and kissed its little white innocent brow, and nearly broke her heart with her strong fellow-feeling for it. What the old woman had coarsely called the baby, she (Beatrix) knew herself to be. Was the fact to be thrust before her perpetually?

HUMORS OF THE DAY.

A BIBLE class was asked to name the precious stones named in the Bible. After several scholars had given answers, one little fellow called out. "Well, Thomas, what precious stones have you found?" "Brimstone," was the reply.

SPORTING INTELLIGENCE—A stable mind.

What stone should have been placed at the Garden of Eden after the expulsion? Adam ain't in (Adamantine).

THE GOBBLER'S CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Ah, hungry reader! gormandizer!
How blest your lot, how foul is mine!
Pray realize it—realize, ah!
Mine 'tis to *die* that you may *dine.*

When from the natal shell I bursted
To fledgeling life and parent hen,
That precious life I little trusted
Would be so soon *shelled out* again.

Amid the barn-yard's rare attractions,
Strutting the feathered herd among,
I little dreamed such fowl eggs-actions
On Christian holidays were wrung.

I never troubled the Hereafter:
The present was sufficient bliss—
Alas! it is no cause for laughter
To find our *necks' twirled* short in this.

Yet 'twas for this betimes I fattened,
For this alone so fully fed:
That when a Christmas-day next happened
My *veins* should not in *vain* be bled.

For this I proudly strutted, hobbled!
I dreamt not of this bitter cup.
Long time I gobbled, gobbled, gobbled,
But now at last I'm gobbled up.

Say, reader, am I justly treated?
Should that which is of right my meet
Be freely out to strangers meted?
Confess it now, I beg, entreat!

Regard my end with melancholy—
Drawn and quartered, basted, sauced—
And when you sing the yule and holly
Contemplate, too, the holocaust.

EX-PENSIVE.—What more natural than that sentimental young ladies, when they change their condition of single-blessedness, ceasing to be pensive, should be expensive!

NONSENSE!—A correspondent writes to ask whether it is probable that the "*funny* bone" is supplied with blood by the "vein of *humor!*"

A SEASONABLE INQUIRY.—Why should winter be called the dead time of year? Is not autumn rather the berry-ing season?

A few weeks since a man approached the rope to which is attached the balloon in which the people of Paris are making ascensions. He drew a knife, when the attendant asked him his intention. "My wife," he replied, "is up in the balloon, and I'd give a hundred francs for the privilege of cutting the rope." The offer was refused.

THE REAL CHAMPIONS OF THE RING—Mothers with daughters to marry.

Why is an author the most wonderful man in the world?—Because his tail comes out of his head.

Why is the letter D like a squalling child?—Because it makes ma mad.

A cynical old bachelor who firmly believes that all women have something to say on all subjects, recently asked a female friend: "Well, Madam, what do *you* hold on this question of female suffrage?" To him the lady responded, calmly: "Sir, I hold my tongue."

Josh Billings says: "I am violently opposed tew ardent speerits as a bevridge, but for manufacturin purposes I think a little of it tastes good."

A Frenchman who had purchased a country seat was complaining of the want of birds in his garden. "Set some traps," replied an old officer, "and they'll come. I was once in Africa and there wasn't supposed to be a woman within two hundred miles. I hung a pair of ear-rings and a collar upon a tree, and the next morning I found two women under the branches."

Lady Margaret Herbert asked somebody for a pretty pattern for a night-cap. "Well," said the person, "what signifies the pattern of a night-cap?" "Oh, child," said she, "you know *in case of fire!*"

A little four or five years old boy was seated at the table eating his dinner. A small cut of beef-steak was given him, and taking it up in his hands he resolutely endeavored to get a bite off the end of it. It being pretty tough—as beef-steak sometimes happens to be—he pulled and jerked and grunted at the task a little more than was consistent with modern ideas of polite dining. After a few earnest struggles all in vain, he turned to his mother with a look of mingled energy and despair, and said, through his vexation and tears, "Mamma, me's going to have a piece off this meat or pull my mout out!"

A little girl, happening to hear her mother speaking of going into half mourning, said: "Why are we going into half mourning, mamma; are any of our relations half dead?"

A COUNTRY CHRISTMAS.

FOR sports, for pageantry and plays,
Thou hast thy eves and holidays,
On which the young men and maids meet
To exercise their dancing feet;
Tripping the comely country round,
With daffodils and daisies crown'd.
Thy wakes, thy quintals, here thou hast
Thy May-poles too, with garlands graced;
Thy morris-dance, thy Whitsun ale,
Thy shearing feast, which never fail;
Thy harvest-home, thy wassail-bowl,
That's tost up after fox i' th' hole;
Thy mummeries, thy Twelfth-night kings
And queens, thy Christmas revelings.

COWLEY.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

SOFTLY the echoes come and go
Over the crackling frost and snow—
The echoes of the bells which ring
A welcome to the Saviour King!
While children's voices, low and mild,
Sing praises to the Heav'n-born child.
Far and near, high and low,
Softly the echoes come and go.

Softly beats the list'ning heart,
In all the music taking part;
And through the corridors of thought
Come breezy tones with mem'ry fraught—
The tones which in our youthful days,
Taught us to kneel in prayer and praise.
Far and near, high and low,
Softly the echoes come and go.

CHRISTMAS-EVE AT HOME.

Thank you. I heard the cheerful noise,
The joyous shout, and ringing laughter,
With which the "merrie, merrie boyes"
Shook wall and floor, and roof and rafter.
I heard their carol as they sought
A block made to their hearts' desiring;
Enjoyed the song with which they brought
The old brand to the new log's firing.

Thank you again. I own 'tis cold;
But, like the exemplary Horner,
Of whom our infant classics told,
I'll eat my mince-pie in the corner.
While you observe the ancient way,
And hug the earth I leave forever;
Let me be human while I may,
And snatch the comfort of a shiver.

Lonely? Oh no! I share your glee,
And Some One, cloaked, sits by me smiling,
Who, with a gladness sad to see,
My heart is of its cares beguiling.
Yes. It is fitting that you should
Go forth to give the orchard wassail;
We will remain—a liegeman good
Must pay his homage as a vassal.

Returned? May apple, plum, and pear,
By no rude, blustering tempest shaken,
Yield you ripe fruit, and luscious cheer,
Months after my last leave is taken!
I shall not see or pip or rind,
But trow the last will serve me better,
If it, by Some One thrown behind,
Will only shape my name's first letter.

Then, fair and Christian friends, to-night
Fly not into a prudish passion,
If I bespeak a Christian rite
To be performed in Christian fashion.
Some One will pardon if I take
Too kindly to the sacred pastime;
If I kiss all, 'tis for her sake,
And 'tis, as well she knows, the last time.

THE BEAUTY WITH THE HOLLY.—[SEE POEM, "A COUNTRY CHRISTMAS," PAGE 827.]

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.—[SEE POEM, PAGE 827.]

Good friends and dear, who stay at home,
Your loved and loving ones caressing,
Let us, before I Eastward roam,
Exchange a homely, hearty blessing.

Enjoy your wassail, Christmas mirth,
Your forfeits, and your feasts of reason
I, severed by near half the earth,
May but in dreams repeat this season.

And if, ere the next Christmas come,
Some One, a pattern of devotion,
Should find me in my distant home,
O'er half a world of land and ocean;

Think, as you muster side by side
Another year in just such weather,
We, though three thousand leagues divide,
In heart may still be all together!

CHRISTMAS-EVE AT HOME.—[SEE THE POEM.]

WRECKS IN THE HARBOR OF SAINT THOMAS, WEST INDIES, AFTER THE LATE HURRICANE.

SALE OF THE DICKENS TICKETS.

THE excitement in Boston over the purchase of tickets to Mr. CHARLES DICKENS's readings was only excelled by that which was witnessed in this city. Our illustration shows the scene at Steinway Hall on December 11, when the sale of the second course tickets was begun. Although the sale was announced to begin at nine A.M., on December 11, the throng of purchasers began to assemble at ten o'clock on the night before, and at least 150 persons waited in the line or queue all night. When the sale began not less than five hundred persons, including two women, were in the line. So successful have been the readings of Mr. DICKENS in this city that the original course of four readings has been twice repeated. Our illustration gives the spirit of the exciting scene.

THE ST. THOMAS WRECKS.

WE gave in a previous Number of the *Weekly* a view of the city and bay of St. Thomas, the chief town and principal harbor of our new possessions in the West Indies. We give on this page an engraving, from a sketch made by an officer of the English mail packet ship *Douro*, which shows the aspect of the city and harbor the day after the first of the late terrible hurricanes in that region. The artist who sends the sketch writes that "the harbor was strewn with wrecks, the light-house gone, and many houses roofless. A confused mass, near the middle of the harbor, built up of crushed hulls, broken spars, and loose cordage, was formed by the ship *British Empire;* alongside her was the steamer *Colombian*, now showing nothing but funnel, masts, and rigging above water; right underneath these two were a French bark and a brig. Nearer to the shore lay the Spanish war-steamer *Nunez de Velasco*, and a French mail steamer. These two alone out of the many vessels lying in the harbor lived through the hurricane, having cut away their masts, and trusted for safety to the strength of their cables, chains, and anchors. Against the floating dock was the American brigantine *Nellie Gay*—a pitiable object—every mast and spar either carried overboard or lying on her deck. The floating dock itself, just approaching completion, would in a few weeks have been available for docking and repairing; but, in common with every thing else belonging to this ill-fated town, it met with accidents, the *Nellie Gay* and the *Colombian* having been driven against it. As a consequence of this, one of its pontoons has sustained some damage which, though found by the divers to be of no great consequence, prevents the dock being made use of for some little time. Had it been preserved from injury its value at the present crisis would have been immense. Dotted over the harbor were masts showing a few feet above water, marking the spots where the various schooners and other craft had gone down; and on the beach all round lay other vessels, hurled by the force of wind and wave far upon the land, some positively in the streets of the town. A further survey showed more equally terrible casualties. Round the island, to the left of the town, looking from the sea, lay in one cluster five large steamers, including the *Derwent*, so crushed together that to distinguish masts and funnels proper to each was impossible. At a distance of a quarter of a mile lay one funnel thrown across and resting on the deck of a large ship, some feet of whose stern had been cut away sharp and square, showing her decks

BUYING TICKETS FOR THE DICKENS READINGS AT STEINWAY HALL.

in section. But cases like these repeated themselves on every hand in the terrible scene of destruction."

On landing and walking through the town our correspondent found the wharves and buildings adjacent entirely destroyed along the shore, and the streets almost blocked up with broken rafters, zinc roofs, heaps of bricks and rubbish, and fragments of household furniture from the many houses which had been overthrown. Even ponderous articles, such as an anchor, some cart-wheels, a piano-forte, and slabs of marble, had been carried by the wind to the distance of some yards. The walls were marked by the stones and bricks dashed against them as if bombarded with cannon, while the windows of every house were dashed in, though protected by iron-bound shutters. Of the trees in Cocoanut Square and on the suburban hills a few bare trunks only were left. Dead bodies were still hourly cast ashore by the sea, and were immediately placed in coffins on the beach to be carried away for interment; by the afternoon of the 30th nearly 300 were thus buried.

The loss of the United States steamer *Monongahela*, which we have already announced, has been officially confirmed. She was lifted by the tidal wave which accompanied the hurricane over the warehouses in the town of Frederickstadt, St. Croix, and landed high and dry in the streets. The steamer *De Soto*, announced as lost at the same time, was not badly injured, and arrived safely at Fortress Monroe on December 12.

EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE.

The intelligence and judgment of the Imperial Commission in the matter of awards are clearly evinced in the following extract from *The Exposition Universelle Illustrated* ("publication authorized by the Imperial Commission").

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The means provided for the construction of this Great National Work are ample. The United States grants its Six Per Cent. Bonds at the rate of from $16,000 to $48,000 per mile, for which it takes a *second lien* as security, and receives payment to a large if not to the full extent of its claim in services. These Bonds are issued as each twenty-mile section is finished, and after it has been examined by United States Commissioners and pronounced to be in all respects a first-class road, thoroughly supplied with depots, repair-shops, stations, and all the necessary rolling stock and other equipments.

The United States also makes a donation of 12,800 acres of land to the mile, which will be a source of large revenue to the Company. Much of this land in the Platte Valley is among the most fertile in the world, and other large portions are covered with heavy pine forests, and abound in coal of the best quality.

The Company is also authorized to issue its own First Mortgage Bonds to an amount equal to the issue of the Government, and no more. Hon. E. D. Morgan and Hon. Oakes Ames are Trustees for the Bondholders, and deliver the Bonds to the Company only as the work progresses, so that they always represent an actual and productive value.

The authorized capital of the Company is One Hundred Million Dollars, of which over five millions have been paid in upon the work already done.

EARNINGS OF THE COMPANY.

At present, the profits of the Company are derived only from its local traffic, but this is already much more than sufficient to pay the interest on all the Bonds the Company can issue, if not another mile were built. It is not doubted that when the road is completed the through traffic of the only line connecting the Atlantic and Pacific States will be large beyond precedent, and, as there will be no competition, it can always be done at profitable rates.

It will be noticed that the Union Pacific Railroad is, in fact, a *Government Work*, built under the supervision of Government officers, and to a large extent with Government money, and that its bonds are issued under Government direction. It is believed that no similar security is so carefully guarded, and certainly no other is based upon a larger or more valuable property. As the Company's

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JOHN J. CISCO, Treasurer, New York.
November 23, 1867.

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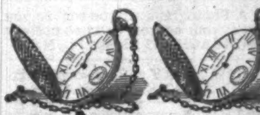

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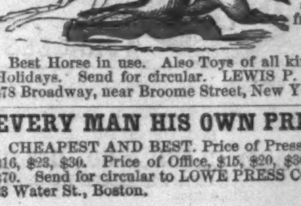

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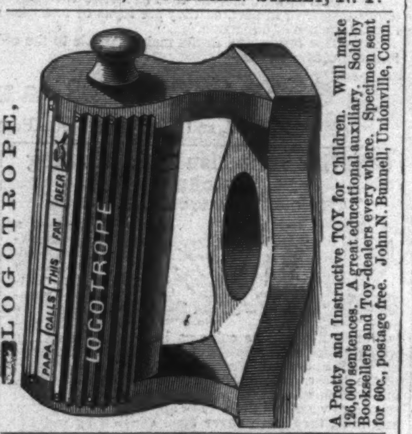

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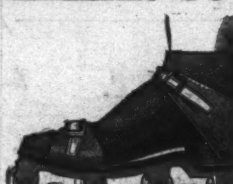

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